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ABSTRACT

This document consists of six reports that each provide essential basic information on the organization of the education system of one of the following countries as of 1995-1996: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Each report includes information on some or all of the following aspects of the given country's initial training system: responsibilities and administration (background, basic principles, distribution of responsibilities, legal framework and administration, legislative process, reforms, provision, curricular regulation, inspection, advisory/consultative bodies, financing, private schools, vocational orientation/guidance); preschool education (historical background, administration, curriculum and assessment, teachers, statistics); compulsory education; compulsory education and/or basic education (primary education, presecondary education, institutional separation at the lower secondary level, basic school curriculum, textbooks, assessment, teachers, statistics); secondary education (aims, curriculum, upper and lower secondary school education, secondary vocational and technical schools, integrated secondary vocational-technical schools, vocational training centers, assessment, teachers, statistics); vocational education (vocational schools, secondary vocational-technical schools and technical schools, special vocational training schools); teachers (teacher training, inservice teacher training, teachers' working hours); and higher education (admission requirements, tuition fees, types and lengths of courses, qualifications, academic year, universities and equivalent, nonuniversity higher education). (Forty-nine tables/figures are included.) (MN)



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Supplement to the Study on the Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union

The Situation in Bulgaria,
the Czech Republic, Hungary,
Poland, Romania and Slovakia

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in the European Union**

**The Situation in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic,
Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia**

November 1997

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Introduction

The 1995 edition of the publication *Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union* produced by Eurydice in cooperation with Cedefop (as far as initial training is concerned) covers the 15 Member States of the European Union and the EFTA/EEA countries.

In 1996, six of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) became involved in Eurydice activities, as part of the preparatory measures financed through the PHARE programme, with a view to their future participation in Socrates, the European Union programme on education.

This supplement to the present publication, which provides essential basic information on the organization of the education system of each country concerned, was then considered a priority as the first contribution of these countries to Eurydice activities.

In close cooperation with the Eurydice European Unit, the new Eurydice units in each of these countries prepared their own descriptions thus providing a very clear and concise presentation of the individual education systems.

We wish to thank them for this work which enables Eurydice to provide its readers with information on education in an increasing number of European countries, thus bringing out more clearly the rich diversity of systems which characterize Europe.

Luce Pépin
Head of the Eurydice
European Unit

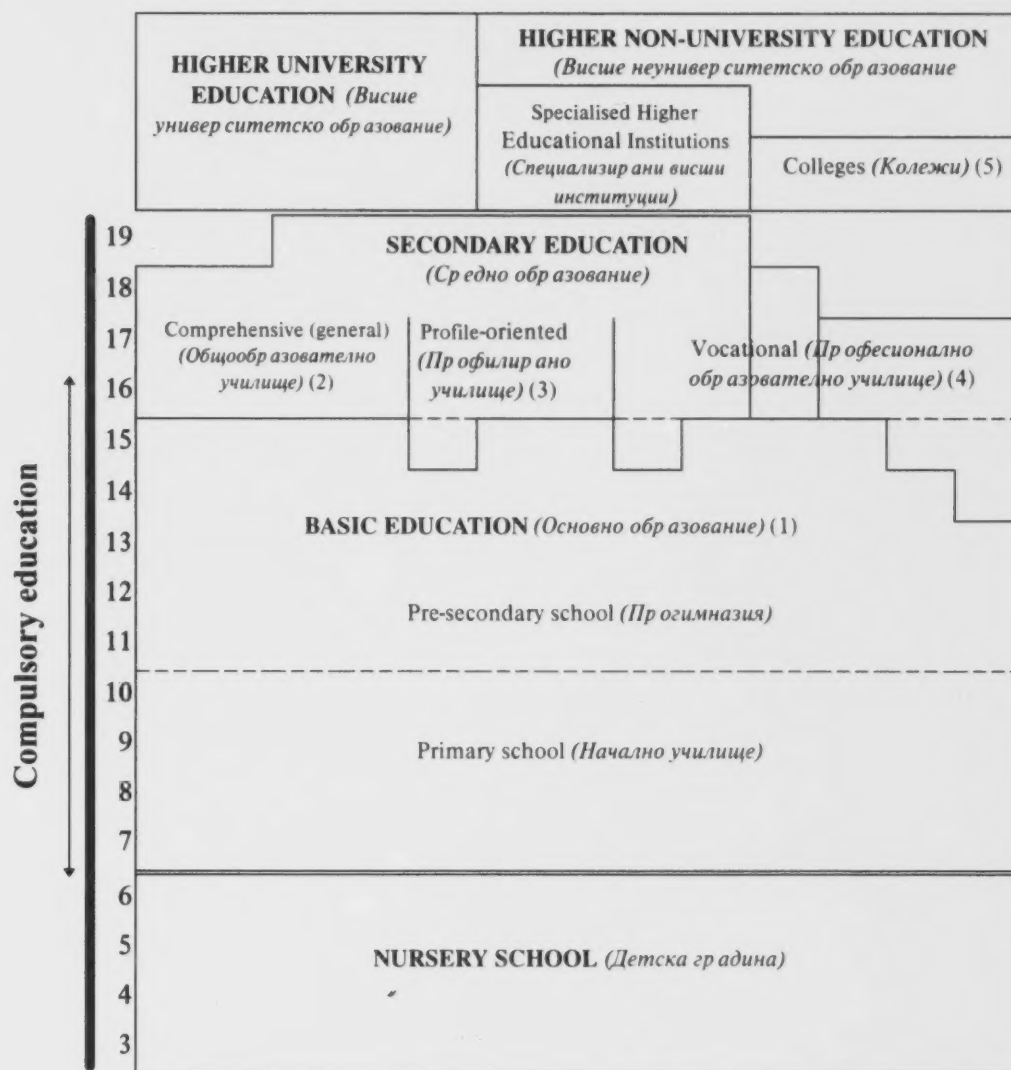
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Bulgaria

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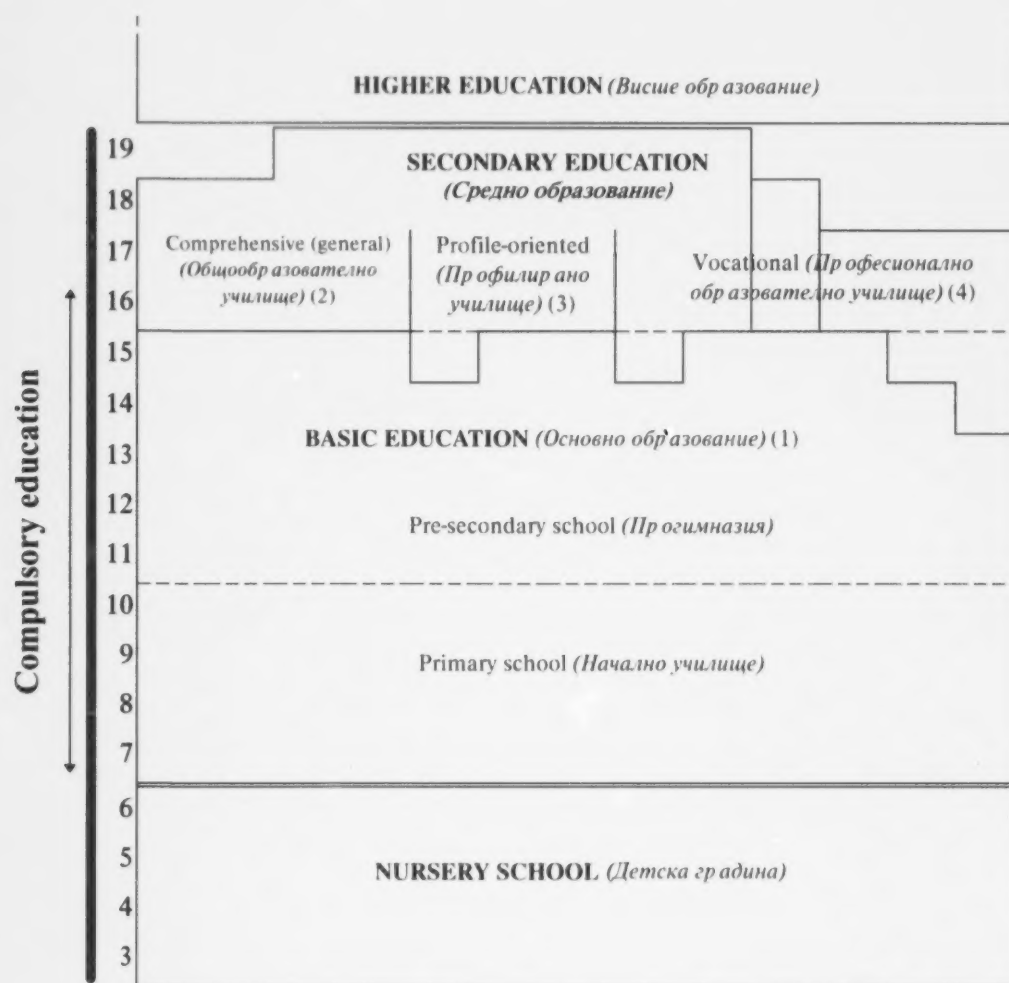
Bulgaria

Structure of the Bulgarian educational system after the last reform in Higher Education (end of 1995)



- (1) Basic education runs from years 1 to 8 and comprises:
 - primary education;
 - pre-secondary education (lower secondary school) years 5 to 8;
 - vocational-technical classes after completion of years 6, 7 and 8.
- (2) Secondary comprehensive (general) education can be obtained at comprehensive secondary schools with admission after year 8 and a three- or four-year course of instruction.
- (3) The profile oriented secondary schools with admission after years 7 or 8 with respectively a five- or four-year course of instruction provide secondary comprehensive (general) education with a given profile of instruction (foreign languages, natural sciences, mathematics, humanities).
- (4) Secondary vocational education can be obtained at:
 - technical (vocational secondary) schools with admission after years 7 or 8 and with respectively a five- or four-year course of instruction. The first type of school provides intensive foreign language instruction;
 - secondary vocational-technical schools with admission after year 8 and a three-year course of instruction.
- (5) The colleges offer a programme of at least three years of study leading to the degree of *Specialist*.

Structure before the last reform in Higher Education (year 1994-1995)



- = division in the level/type of education
 ————— = alternative beginning or end of level /type of education

- (1) Basic education ran from years 1 to 8 and comprised:
- primary education;
 - pre-secondary education (lower secondary school) from years 5 to 8;
 - vocational-technical classes after completion of years 6, 7 and 8.
- (2) Secondary comprehensive (general) education could be obtained at comprehensive secondary schools with admission after year 8 and a three- or four-year course of instruction.
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- (4) Secondary vocational education could be obtained at:
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 - secondary vocational-technical schools with admission after year 8 and a three-year course of instruction.

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

The Republic of Bulgaria is situated in south-eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula on a territory of 110 993 square km with a population of approximately 8 427 000. As regards its state system, Bulgaria is a Parliamentary-governed Republic with a multi-party political system. Orthodox Christianity is the traditional faith and the official language is Bulgarian.

The dynamic economic and political changes during recent years linked to the country's democratization have also had a significant impact on the education system. Market economy conditions, the introduction of the principles of free choice and competition, as well as emerging new priorities in the public sector called for new solutions to the problems regarding the quality of education of the young as well as the link between general and vocational education. Social development in recent years has initiated an opening-up of the education system to the wealth of available experience in the European Union and elsewhere, as well as a re-evaluation of national traditions.

1.2. Basic principles: education

During the last fifty years, basic legislation in the field of education has undergone modifications in 1948, 1959 and 1991. The latest education reform in 1991 is based on the following principles:

- an equal start for everybody through general and compulsory education up to the age of 16;
- a right to secondary education for every citizen, and a free choice of education;
- free education (and training) in state and community schools;
- secular education, including civic instruction;
- equality and joint instruction for girls and boys;
- a link between general and vocational training, between theory and practice;
- the combination of compulsory and optional instruction; involving class, group and individual forms of work;
- unity of action in education and other socio-pedagogical factors;
- participation of parents and the community in school activities;
- provision of continuous education and vocational training with no upper age limit.

The basic **social mission** of education is defined as preparing young people for a full and active life in a democratic society under market economy conditions, in which a person's fulfilment includes their taking responsibility for the current and future life of the nation and mankind in general.

The social processes, the economic and social context, as well as the aims of education also determine **the main priorities** for its further development. These are as follows:

- increasing of quality of education as the most effective means of influencing the quality of the work force;
- providing basic education for all, involving the acquisition of at least a minimum amount of knowledge and skills necessary for social and professional personal development;
- extending compulsory education in order to provide diversity and flexibility to enable pupils to combine different subjects;
- raising the level of mother tongue competence and foreign language instruction provided to young people as a major condition necessary for effective social and professional communication and development;
- full use of computer and information technologies in schools as an essential part of pupils' training as citizens of an information society;

- mobility of training and continuity of education, linked to the accelerated technological developments taking place in contemporary society;
- civil instruction and study of individual aims, ambitions and values, which prepare the pupil for life in a democratic society.

1.3. Legal framework and administration

The **laws** on education are adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. Basic and secondary education are established in compliance with the National Education Act (NEA) 1991, and higher education is established in accordance with the Higher Education Act (HEA) 1995, which guarantees the autonomy of higher education institutions. Implementation of the laws is ensured by the appropriate administrative bodies.

The basic characteristics of the **administration** of education are its further democratization and decentralization as well as a broadening of the autonomy given to the education establishments. A simplified administrative structure, professional qualification and expert competence, freedom of action and innovation are currently being established.

The administration of education is organized on four levels: national, regional, municipal and school level. **The Ministry of Education, Science and Technologies (MEST)** is a specialized body of the Council of Ministers for the administration of the education system. It determines and implements state policy in the field of education; forecasts and plans the activities pertaining to the development of education by drafting long-term programmes and operational plans; organizes and coordinates the work of the administrative units and education establishments; monitors the activity of all types and levels of schools (including nursery schools) in the country; approves school documentation and planning of school places; ensures the implementation of innovations, the supply of textbooks, curricula and teaching staff; and carries out international activities in the field of education.

MEST is engaged in organizing and coordinating activities with other ministries and institutions associated with the administration of schools which train specialists in fields such as mechanical engineering, chemistry, agriculture, transport, mining, economics, etc.

The central administration of MEST approves the obligatory school documentation – guidelines, school curricula, programmes, state education requirements, textbooks, handbooks etc., with the assistance of a large circle of experts from research institutes and higher education institutions, experts from regional and community administrations, school heads, teachers, etc.

The municipal bodies for education are a part of the state territorial structure and participate in the implementation of the municipalities' educational policy. They are responsible for the compulsory education of pupils up to the age of 16, pre-school education, extra-mural activities, health care, financing, provision of equipment, premises, school meals, hostels, recreation and sport facilities, transport for children, pupils and teachers, scholarships and special assistance for pupils.

The school is a legal entity. Its pedagogical, organizational, methodological, administrative and managerial autonomy have been extended considerably in recent years. The school administrative bodies are the Head and the Pedagogical Council. Since the school year 1994/95, the tradition of setting up a School Board of Trustees has been restored to create a link with parents and the public. Members of this Board are the school head, teachers, parents, public figures, businessmen, etc. School public bodies may also involve the Parents' Council, the Students' Council, the Class Council, etc. The school has the right to organize its activity by taking into account the age of the pupils, their class and extra-curricular activities as well as the administrative functions of the school.

The School Head is responsible for all activities – he plans, organizes, manages, coordinates, motivates and monitors the work of the teachers and the school in general.

The school head manages its funds – both budgetary and extra-budgetary.

Experts at MEST and the RI (Regional Inspectorate), as well as school heads are employed on the basis of a competition announced by MEST, and the deputy school heads, teachers and other members of staff are appointed by the school head.

The scientific assembly and dissemination of data in the field of education is performed by the Institute for Education and Science (IES), MEST and other education institutions.

The regional, community and school administrations ensure the necessary organizational, pedagogical, material, financial, staff and other conditions required for effective education to take place.

Cooperation with companies and other businesses which support the school financially is of particular importance for obtaining the necessary materials and equipment.

Professional associations of teachers (trade unions, etc.) ensure the protection of their members' interests regarding adequate wages, the regulation of working conditions, the work regime etc.

1.4. Inspection

Control over the teaching process and its results is carried out by the competent bodies: MEST, RI, school heads and deputy heads.

A special department at MEST called the General School Inspectorate manages and controls the activity of the RI and schools. Control over the instruction in different disciplines, individual classes and school levels is carried out at national level by the experts of MEST, working in different departments: General education, vocational training and higher education.

28 School Inspectorates are established in the country on a regional level – they are specialized territorial bodies of MEST for operative administration of the education structures. They have planning, organizational, coordination and control functions over school activities within their respective region. Staff of the RI are experts in the organization of secondary education and experts in the different school disciplines.

School heads and deputy heads also have power to control the teaching process and education results.

Inspection is not independent from the other activities of the administrative bodies, but is an integral part thereof.

In recent years, a National Testing Centre has been established within the Institute for Education and Science and its major function is to carry out research work on evaluating the results of the education system.

The inspecting bodies monitor school legislation, school curricula and syllabuses and state education requirements in terms of performance and efficiency of the teaching methods used, and also organize examinations. They assist the teachers and evaluate their work and the quality of education delivered.

1.5. Advisory (consultative) bodies

At all levels of administration, specialized public bodies (Supreme School Council, consultative, expert bodies, etc.) exist alongside the state bodies in order to assist the work of the latter and the adoption of administrative decisions. They have a different status – standing or temporary – with either constant or temporary membership. At school level, such a body is called the Board of School Trustees, but other bodies could also be established – methodological councils, subject-oriented commissions, expert committees.

1.6. Financing

Education is financed by grants from the state budget through MEST, which is the major source of financing, as well as from local budgets through the community administrations. The grant is determined in a differentiated manner according to the level of education and type of school involved. Capital investments are also determined in order to subsidize research work, to promote teacher qualification and the wages for staff working in education. Private schools are not financed by the state.

As planned, the relative share of expenditure for education in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1994 was 4.51%; in 1995 – 3.99%; and in 1996 – 4.27%.

The education outlays, including those planned for capital investment, are distributed between the different levels of education (secondary schools, semi-higher institutions, higher education institutions). Funds can also

be awarded for in-service teacher training. Actual spending on education has been increasing, although the relative share of GDP has been decreasing in recent years. As already stated when enumerating the principles of education, the latter is free-of-charge for all pupils.

1.7. Private schools

Private schools are new in the Bulgarian educational system. The first private schools were established in 1992. The order and conditions of establishment are defined in the *National Education Act – 1991, Statute and special regulation of MEST for private schools*. Private schools have a curriculum, whose compulsory part must meet the requirements of the state curriculum. Private schools have the right to supplement this with other curricula e.g. intensive foreign language teaching, music, arts, ecology, management, trade and marketing.

Private schools as part of the education system are managed and controlled by MEST, including awarding certificates upon completion of secondary education and vocational qualifications.

75 private schools are now established in Bulgaria: 12 nursery schools, 21 primary schools, 9 pre-secondary schools, 33 vocational schools, 7 secondary schools (5 of which with foreign language provision) and 5 theological (Orthodox and Islamic) semi-higher institutions. There are approximately 6 500 pupils in private schools and more or less 500 teachers.

Private schools represent 1% of all the schools in the country.

Parents send their children to private schools for reasons linked to their expectations for better quality education and study conditions as well as additional training in different subjects. Such reasons, however, are not always justified.

1.8. Vocational orientation/guidance (Career Guidance System)

During 1991/92, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) started to develop a new national system of career guidance. In 1993, a Department for Career Guidance and Continuous Education was established at MEST along with corresponding structures on national, regional and local levels.

The career guidance system is a state institution and deals with 13- to 14-year-old pupils up to their entry into Higher Education.

In 1994, a Career Development, Training and Research Centre was created at MEST which deals with research, development, information and education activities. The centre's aim is to provide methodical assistance to the career guidance system.

During the same year, 16 of the old offices were reorganized and 11 new District Career Guidance and Counselling Offices were created with approximately 100 experts.

There are national norms for the structures at local level. One school adviser is recommended for 500 pupils. Approximately 900 school advisers work in this system.

Since 1996, the Centre for Research and Training in Career Education is contained within the structure of the newly founded Institute for Education and Science at MEST, but under the name Career Development Training and Realization Centre. One of the new functions of the Centre is the development and implementation of a system for monitoring and tracking pupils' results on leaving the secondary schools and schools for higher education. The Centre is currently working on the implementation of a pilot project entitled "School-University- Industry/Business" in several secondary and higher education schools.

2. Pre-school education

2.1. Historical background

Pre-school education is 120 years old. It has been developed following European traditions combined with national trends. It has found its place in Bulgarian legislation since 1891, when compulsory education in nursery schools was introduced. In 1934, a legal Ordinance on pre-school education was adopted, which defines three types of nursery schools and regulates their activities as a level of primary education. The National Education Act from 1991 also provides for preparatory groups and classes aimed at preparing children for school. Religion is not a constitutional part of public pre-school education.

2.2. Administration

The system of pre-school education includes children from the age of 2 to the age of 6 or 7. Besides the state-funded sector, which is prevalent (more than 95%), the private sector is also developing.

Nursery school attendance is optional. They are open to all children who want to prepare for school against payment of a minimal fee, which is reduced considerably for low-income families.

Pre-school education includes day-care nursery schools, health-care nursery schools, specialized nursery schools, part-time nursery schools and preparatory groups for school (pre-school groups). Most children attend the day-care nursery schools.

Children in nursery schools are divided into three groups according to age – from 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years, and from 5 to 6 years. The age division is not obligatory and can in some circumstances be wavered (according to the number of children in a group or the level of development of a given child). The children may be divided into mixed age groups. There are 12 to 22 children per group. State nursery schools are opened where at least four but no more than eight groups are formed. Most of the nursery schools are separate institutions opened by the municipalities. They have a full-time work regime and are located in purpose-built premises. If there are too few children, groups are formed within schools where pre-school groups are also organized. They work on a part-time basis and in shifts.

There are pilot nursery schools in the Teacher Training Institutes.

2.3. Curriculum and assessment

The **basic aim** of the nursery school is to offer the necessary conditions for the development of each child's abilities and to make them ready for school.

The volume and content of the courses for different activities are defined according to two programmes:

- Programme for Education of Children aged between two and seven;
- Nursery school activities.

The selection and structure of the contents are determined by the abilities of the 3- to 6-year-olds. The education content is classified by subject, and for each age group the subject is widened and developed. The content is integrated into several main themes: "My world", "Myself and others", "Me and nature", etc. The programmes operate at national level and teachers are entitled to opt for one of them.

One basic method of organizing pedagogical interaction is through play. The child's development is studied jointly by teachers and parents in a natural environment and through certain activities (play, occupations, holidays, excursions, etc.). Methodology includes play, the study of the children's creativity and their behaviour in class.

Within the preparatory groups, the basic form of instruction takes place in classes which prepare the children for introduction into the classroom style of education at school. At this stage, the children pass automatically from one age group to the next, regardless of their individual development and results. To provide a more

personalized system, there are set state education standards, as well as a system for assessing the achievements and development of each child within the preparatory group.

The transition to school is straightforward. This is guaranteed by the continuity of the programmes of education and the type of instruction provided both in the nursery schools and in the first year of school.

2.4. Teachers

There are 24 679 teachers (pedagogical staff) working in the pre-school education system in Bulgaria. They have some form of higher (university) qualification and perform administrative and pedagogical functions. If there are less than five groups in a certain nursery school, the head also teaches a group, or in some cases is head of two nursery schools.

There are approximately 20 844 teachers in pre-school education, 38% of them have higher pedagogical education (have a higher education diploma), 60% have graduated from semi-higher institutions and only 1.2% have secondary school education. Every group has two teachers, who are trained to be generalists and not teach just one subject. The main task of all teachers is to organize the education processes and the conditions in the nursery school and to care for the well-being of all children. They can choose from all the available education programmes, and work full-time, i.e. 6 hours a day.

There are 661 music teachers who have special music training and can play at least one musical instrument (piano, accordion, etc.). One teacher is in charge of 12 groups and his/her task is to organize and provide a musical environment for the children's musical and aesthetic/artistic development.

Larger nursery schools with more than 8 groups have psychologists. They help teachers with programme development and in their interaction with the children.

Pedagogical staff

School heads	Teachers	Music teachers	Psychologists	Total
3 067	20 844	661	107	24 679

2.5. Statistics

Types of nursery schools and rates of attendance

Types of nursery schools		Full-time			Part-time	Seasonal	Total
		normal	health care	special			
number of nursery schools		3 201	13	29	406	3	3 652
number of groups		12 124	68	130	1 360	9	13 691
rate of attendance	number of children	231 502	1 213	1 442	24 649	129	258 935
	average	36.15%	0.19%	0.23%	3.85%		40.42%

3. Compulsory education

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Education Act (1991), school education is compulsory from the age of 6 or 7 up to the age of 16. The country has accumulated significant expertise in this sort of education. Primary education (years 1 to 4) is compulsory since 1878. The second part of basic education (years 5 to 7/8) is compulsory since 1921.

Attendance of the first year at the age of 6 or 7 is optional and is a matter of parental choice. Most of the schools which provide foreign language instruction in the first year define specific entry requirements and set special tests.

The average rate of attendance of a given pupil must not be less than two-thirds of the hours for each subject studied. If this norm is not respected, for whatever reason, the pupil must sit term examinations or/and annual examinations in the subject(s) concerned.

4. Basic education

Basic education (years 1 to 8) in Bulgaria covers primary school (years 1 to 4) and pre-secondary school (years 5 to 8). It may be obtained at state, municipal and private schools.

Basic education is free-of-charge with the exception of private primary and basic schools. Textbooks are also free and are distributed at school.

All basic schools in Bulgaria are coeducational.

According to the National Education Act from 1991, a preparatory class should be organized for children aged 6 and over, who have a poor knowledge of Bulgarian and who have not attended nursery school.

4.1. Primary education

The main aim of primary education (years 1 to 4) is to form basic knowledge and abilities, which are the basis for the pupils' further education and development. The trend is for instruction to be closer to the pupils' everyday life, to assist them in their study, to increase their desire to lead active lives, to understand and solve the problems they face and to gradually acquire the qualities required from citizens of an humanistic and democratic society.

Non-attendance for whatever reason of more than one third of the class hours in each discipline requires the pupils to pass an examination in order to make up their marks.

The number of pupils in a class averages 20 to 25. Year classes are formed according to age.

The work at primary school is organized into either half or full days, depending on whether the single or double shift system is used. In the full-day scheme, besides general instruction some other activities are also organized: extra/remedial lessons, recreation and sports activities and others based on individual interests.

Teaching is organized in a five-day week. General instruction comprises 22 hours per week for years 1 and 2, 25 hours per week for years 3 and 4.

Instruction in optional/extra subjects is distributed as follows: 3 hours per week for year 1 and 4 hours for years 2 to 4.

The academic year runs from 15 September to 24 May for year 1; 15 September to 31 May for years 2 to 4.

4.1.1. Curriculum

There is a single curriculum for primary education which is compulsory for all pupils from years 1 to 4. In the 1996/97 school year it included the following subjects: Bulgarian language and literature – 8 hours per week for years 1 to 4, mathematics – 4 hours, native history – one hour every two weeks (year 1) and 2 hours per week (years 2 to 4), nature studies – one hour every two weeks in year 3 and 2 hours per week in year 4, arts – 2 hours per week, handicrafts – an hour per week in years 1 and 2 and 2 hours per week in years 3 and 4, sport – 7 hours every two weeks in year 1 and 3 hours per week in years 2 to 4.

4.1.2. Assessment

First year pupils do not repeat the year. Those with difficulties participate in additional summer courses.

Assessment in the first year is qualitative and includes the following levels: fair, good, very good and excellent. The knowledge and skills of pupils from years 2 to 4 are evaluated during the school year by oral, written and practical tests and other forms of control. Assessment is carried out by the teacher and periodically by the teacher with the state administrative bodies. The term score is the average of at least three current marks. The annual score is the average of the two term scores. For those subjects included in the curriculum with only one hour per week or every two weeks, there is no term score and the annual score is the average of at least three current marks. Tests are not compulsory.

The pupil's knowledge and skills are evaluated by using a six-point scoring system including the marks excellent (6), very good (5), good (4), fair (3) and poor (2). The highest mark is excellent (6). Some disciplines such as singing, fine arts, etc. use a general mark ("pass" or "fail").

Marks are awarded by subject for each term and for each academic year.

At the end of a given year, the assessment results are used to determine whether a pupil may pass to the next class.

After successful completion of year 4, a certificate of primary education is issued. The certificate includes the annual score in the subjects studied in year 4, as well as the score obtained in the chosen/optional subjects. The overall score for completed elementary schooling is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of all the marks in all compulsory education subjects. There are no examinations at the end of year 4.

4.1.3. Teachers

From years 1 to 4, the teacher works with one class.

Primary school teachers have graduated from semi-higher institutions or from higher education institutions (2 to 4 years' training). They are not specialists in a corresponding school discipline but general specialists in pedagogy.

The teachers work on a full-time basis under a permanent or temporary employment contract. The teachers work according to norms and set teaching hours approved in 1990 (State Gazette, issue 9/1990). The teachers for years 1 to 4 have 20 hours' work per week.

The heads and deputy heads have from 72 to 216 hours' teaching workload per academic year.

The teachers for years 1 to 4 work 160 academic days.

4.2. Pre-secondary education

Pre-secondary education (years 5 to 8) lays the foundations for studying the basics of different sciences and at the end of this education pupils should have acquired such skills.

On average, there are 19 or 20 pupils per class. The year classes are formed according to age.

School premises in large cities are used in two shifts and in small towns and villages in one shift.

The organization of the teaching process is based on a five-day week. General instruction comprises 27 hours per week for year 5 and 30 hours per week for years 6, 7 and 8. Chosen subjects represent 4 hours for years 5 to 8. The academic year runs from 15 September to 15 June.

4.2.1. Curriculum

The pre-secondary education curriculum is uniform and compulsory. It provides for studying the Bulgarian language and literature; mathematics; knowledge of the mother land; nature studies; history; physics, chemistry; biology; geography; fine arts; music; work and technics (technical work); physical education. Course content is to provide general instruction. The chosen subjects represent three to four hours of lesson-time per week. These hours are mainly used and distributed between a foreign language and sports or arts-oriented school activities.

Different didactic techniques and methods are used (such as working in groups) and corresponding textbooks, teaching aids and literature, compilations, teaching software, etc. help create an atmosphere of interaction and mutual cooperation between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves.

The teachers and the school have the right to select textbooks and teaching aids.

The basic sources of financing come from the state and the municipalities. There also exist forms of sponsorship.

The education system offers the possibility for early mathematical (from year 5) and language (from year 7) instruction by entry into specialized schools. Admission of pupils is on the basis of entrance exams.

4.2.2. Assessment

Assessment is similar to primary education (see point 4.1. "Assessment").

A certificate of basic education is issued after the successful completion of year 8. The certificate includes the annual score obtained in the subjects studied in year 8, as well as the scores obtained in the chosen subjects. The overall score for completed basic education is calculated with an accuracy of up to 0.01 as an average score of all the marks in all compulsory education subjects. There are no examinations upon completion of year 8.

A pupil passes from basic school to secondary school without having to pass an entrance examination, by using the basic school certificate. The entry into specialized schools after completing their course in year 7 or 8 (language schools, schools of mathematics, technical schools, etc.) is on the basis of entrance examinations.

4.2.3. Teachers

From years 5 to 8 teachers split into different disciplines.

The pre-secondary school teachers have graduated from higher or semi-higher education institutions (3 to 5 years' training). They are specialists in a given discipline.

Teachers work on a full-time basis under a permanent or temporary employment contract. They work according to norms and set teaching hours approved in 1990 (State Gazette, issue 9/1990). The number of hours for teachers teaching years 5 to 8 depends on the discipline taught and varies annually from 648 h., 684 h., 720 h. to 792 h., equivalent to 18, 20, 22 and 30 hours per week.

Heads and deputy heads have from 72 to 216 hours' teaching workload per academic year.

The teachers for years 5 to 8 work 170 academic days. They have an annual paid leave equal to 52 working days. During the rest of the days they carry out different school activities (examinations, work with the children, in-service training, etc.).

4.2.4. Statistics 1995/96 (Basic education)

At the end of the 1995/96 academic year, the number of private schools was as follows: primary schools – 21; pre-secondary education – 9.

The average share of private schools as compared to state schools and municipal schools is about 1%.

The total number of pupils studying in years 1 to 4 during 1995/96 was 427 266, where 14 759 (3.45%) did not graduate and had to repeat a year. Pupils graduate at the age of 10 or 11.

The total number of pupils for years 5 to 8 was 387 841 where 15 164 (4.02%) did not graduate and had to repeat a year. Pupils graduate at the age of 14 or 15.

The pupil to teacher ratio in general education schools is about 14:1 and in specialized schools it is about 16:1.

Number of schools for years 1 to 8 in 1995/96

Total	Years 1 to 4	Years 1 to 8	Years 5 to 8
2 713	567	2 116	30

Teaching staff

School level	Total number	Higher	Semi-higher	Secondary
Years 1 to 4	25 503	11 405	12 567	1 531
Years 5 to 8	340 729	21 502	11 639	1 588

5. Secondary education

The system of secondary education in Bulgaria is regulated by the National Education Act from 1991 and by different regulatory documents produced by MEST. It covers pupils from years 9 to 11 (12, 13).

(This section only deals with general secondary education, secondary vocational education will be described under point 6).

General secondary education is provided by:

- **Secondary comprehensive schools (SCS)**, which cover: elementary school level – years 1 to 4; pre-secondary school level – years 5 to 8; and secondary school level – years 9 to 11.
- Specialized **secondary schools with intensive foreign language instruction** (foreign language schools), entry after completion of year 7 on the basis of a competition. These cover years 8 to 12 (13).
- Specialized **secondary schools** – entry after completion of year 8 (natural sciences and/or mathematics schools, humanities schools, sports schools, art schools, etc.). The school covers years 9 to 12 (13).

There are also **private secondary schools** – entry after completion of year 7 or 8. The school covers years 8/9 to 11 (12).

At some of the schools mentioned above there are entry exams according to the specific orientation of the school (examination on mother tongue and literature, mathematics, etc.).

Secondary education in Bulgaria is free-of-charge with the exception of private schools. Textbooks for secondary schools are purchased by the pupils themselves.

Secondary schools are run by the state, the municipalities and also by private bodies.

All schools in Bulgaria, including secondary schools, are coeducational, i.e. pupils are of both sexes.

There are on average 21 to 23 pupils per class in secondary schools, with an average of 3 to 5 classes per year, i.e. at a given secondary school there are from 12 to 20 classes for years 9 to 12 with an average ranging from 250 to 450 pupils.

Some of the secondary schools (as stated above) contain the basic school in order to form the so-called secondary comprehensive school (SCS). There are pilot secondary schools at the Institute for Education and Science in MEST.

School premises in the big cities are used according to a two-shift scheme, while in small cities and villages they are used according to a one-shift scheme.

The length of the school day corresponds to the possibilities offered by the premises.

The training process is organized on a five-day week basis with the following workload:

Classes	Compulsory instruction (A)	Compulsory-elective instruction (B)	Elective instruction (C)	Total per week (A+B)	Total per week (A+B+C)
Year 9	29 h.	2 h.	4 h.	31 h.	35 h.
Year 10	26 h.	5 h.	4 h.	31 h.	35 h.
Year 11	20 h.	11 h.	4 h.	31 h.	35 h.
Year 12	15 h.	17 h.	4 h.	32 h.	36 h.

For all pupils the academic year begins on 15 September and ends on 24 May for year 12 and 30 June for years 9 to 11.

There are day-time and evening secondary schools.

Classes are organized according to the age of the pupils, but they are also grouped according to the branch subject.

5.1. Aims

The main aims of general secondary education are related to:

- obtaining a basic knowledge of the different sciences, a foreign language, as well as computer, technical and technological literacy;
- orienting the pupil towards professional qualification by preparing for entry to a higher education institution or for employment in the fields of production, services, administration, etc.;
- acquiring competence.

5.2. Curriculum

The level of teaching within the framework of general education is uniform for all secondary comprehensive schools. The subjects from the compulsory-elective and elective instructions are selected and taught according to the school's particular specialization.

At foreign language secondary schools (after year 7), pupils pass a one-year course of intensive foreign language study, the so-called preparatory class. There is no specific adaptation period provided for pupils in other schools. At each secondary school pupils may choose a set number of branches for more detailed study of a given subject (humanities, mathematics and physics, biology and chemistry, etc.).

The basic teaching methods used are the following: lectures, talks, presentations, work with different sources and texts, practical work, pupil research, project work, case-solving and simulation, etc. Textbooks, teaching aids and literature, anthologies, compilations, teaching software, etc., are used. The tendency is to offer pupils and schools the choice of several alternative textbooks and teaching aids which are issued on the basis of competitions organized by MEST.

5.3. Assessment

The knowledge and skills that the pupils acquire during the academic year are assessed by oral, written and practical forms of examination. The control is performed by the teacher throughout the academic year. The marks are recorded for each term and also for the academic year. State administrative bodies (municipal, regional and national) practice continuous control.

The term and/or annual marks are calculated from at least three current marks. Tests are an obligatory form of examination and assessment.

Pupils who have successfully completed the last year of secondary school with an average of at least "very good" (5.00) in the subjects studied and an annual mark for the last year of study (in general compulsory instruction or compulsory-elective instruction) of at least "very good" (5.00) are exempt from sitting the matriculation examinations. Those who have successfully completed their general secondary education receive a certificate of secondary education. The certificate must obligatorily mention the chosen branch of specialization.

Pupils do not automatically pass to the next class. If they have more than three poor marks (Poor = 2), they repeat the year; if they have three or less poor marks, the pupil has the right to sit a supplementary examination; if they do not pass the supplementary examination, they repeat the year. There is no passing to a higher grade on probation.

There are no special classes for remedial pupils.

Pupils sit written matriculation examinations in:

- Bulgarian language and literature;
- an elective-comprehensive education subject or the main branch subject.

After successfully completing the last year of secondary school and passing the written matriculation examinations a certificate of secondary education is issued.

The certificate gives access to higher education – pupils can continue their education at higher education institutions, semi-higher institutions, and partake in other forms of professional qualification by passing entrance examinations. Entrance to establishments of higher learning is based on entrance examination results, the mark from the secondary education certificate as well as the marks obtained in some subjects studied during the course of secondary education.

5.4. Teachers

Within the secondary school, teachers are divided by discipline and have higher education qualifications, having graduated from a corresponding higher education institution, plus a pedagogical qualification. Their training in a higher education institution lasts 4 to 5 years, including in-school practical work.

Teachers are specialists in the discipline they teach and some of them have a second specialization also obtained at higher education level.

According to the timetable which teachers must cover, they may either be employed full-time in a permanent post or attain the necessary number of academic hours by also teaching at another school. There are also teachers who work on a part-time basis, teachers who give lectures and receive payment not under an employment contract, but under a specific contract for a particular type of work. Teachers have 54 days' paid annual leave.

The norms for full-time secondary school teaching depend on the subject taught and could be a minimum of 648, 684, or 720 academic hours annually. The maximum is obtained by multiplying the minimum by 1.5 (i.e. 972, 1026, 1080). The teachers work according to norms approved and published in the State Gazette, issue No. 91/1990.

5.5. Statistics 1995/96 (Secondary education, years 9 to 12)

Number of pupils graduating from SCS	Number of pupils in years 9 to 12	Number of teachers in SCS	Number of SCS
47 531	159 679	12 736	312

The pupil to teacher ratio is 13:1.

6. Vocational education

Vocational schools can be either state schools or private schools. Both types are regulated by the state. The state plays a leading role in planning, financing, organizing and monitoring the quality of education. In the transition to a market economy, the role of the social partners becomes apparent. The professional organizations state their requirements as regards staff training, they express their opinion regarding new professions and participate in the drafting of state requirements on the content of training and in improving the conditions for vocational training. A special system has been developed for employer participation in the assessment of the pupil's professional competence.

Vocational education is provided in:

- vocational technical classes;
- secondary vocational/technical schools and technical schools.

6.1. Vocational schools

In vocational technical classes, training can last four, three or two years upon completion of years 6, 7 and 8 respectively.

In four-year classes, entry takes place before completion of basic education (after year 6). Pupils who cannot finish their basic education may enter these classes. Children from minority groups with harsh living conditions predominate in such institutions. In these schools, pupils receive a lower level qualification and they acquire minimum general knowledge. Upon completion, the pupil can undertake low-skilled work under supervision.

In three-year classes, entry takes place before completion of basic education (after year 7). Education is based on general subjects and vocational training.

In two-year classes, entry takes place before completion of basic education. Pupils obtain a qualification on the basis of vocational training alone, and general subjects are not studied. After successfully completing their course, they have the opportunity to apply for jobs.

After finishing vocational/technical classes, pupils can undertake work under supervision.

6.1.1. Curriculum

Studies are organized according to the state requirements, comprising general (compulsory) instruction as well as specialized vocational training.

6.1.2. Assessment

Studies in vocational/technical classes are completed after sitting examinations on vocational training (theory and practice of the profession).

6.1.3. Teachers

The teachers providing general instruction and theory classes acquire their basic qualifications in higher education institutions with a period of study of 4 to 5 years (8 to 10 semesters). The teachers giving practical classes acquire their basic qualification at semi-higher institutes with a duration of studies equal to 3 years (6 semesters). All teachers are employed by the head under an employment contract in permanent posts with 18 to 22 teaching hours per week.

Teacher qualification can be furthered at the three Teacher Training Institutes, as well as in the free faculties of the technical, economic, agricultural, pedagogical and other higher education institutions. The corresponding higher education institutions and the Teacher Training Institutes are responsible for drafting the school curricula and syllabuses for in-service teacher training.

In-service teacher training aims to provide pedagogical qualification (for teachers who are engineers, economists, agronomists, etc.) or class-qualification (levels I or II). 2 255 teachers possess first or second class qualifications and of these 374 of them have a first class qualification and 1 881 have a second class qualification.

6.2. Secondary vocational/technical schools and technical schools

Secondary vocational/technical schools provide a three-year course of studies upon completion of year 8, leading to secondary education. Technical schools provide a four-year course of studies upon completion of year 8 and a five-year course of studies upon completion of year 7, leading to specialized secondary education. In the latter case, the additional year is needed for extensive foreign language teaching.

The ratio between compulsory general and compulsory vocational training in technical schools is 1:1.5. At the secondary vocational/technical schools the ratio is 1:1.25. The relation between theoretical and practical vocational training depends on the specific characteristics of the occupation being studied.

In order to promote the acquisition of qualifications by pupils aged 16 and over, a system of evening, extra-mural and external forms of training exists in the aforementioned types of schools. For evening classes, attendance is compulsory, while for external classes the instruction is organized on a self-training basis.

6.2.1. Curriculum

The studies are structured into three groups of subjects: **compulsory** (Bulgarian language and literature, a selected foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, physical education, theory and practical training); **compulsory-elective** (1 or 2 subjects from comprehensive or vocational instruction, optional, but compulsory for study within the framework of the established hours of study per week and elective (subjects that feature/do not feature in the curriculum, which are optional and studied in addition to the compulsory hours). The compulsory-elective and elective instruction totals from 4 to 6 hours per week in the different training courses.

6.2.2. Assessment

The course of studies at secondary vocational/technical schools is completed after sitting matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature and on vocational training (theory and practice of the occupation). A certificate of secondary education as well as a certificate of professional qualification are issued.

Studies in technical schools are completed after sitting examinations in Bulgarian language and literature and mathematics and on vocational training (theory and practice of the occupation). A certificate for secondary education as well as a certificate for professional qualification are issued.

6.2.3. Teachers

(See 6.1.)

6.2.4. Statistics 1995/96 (Vocational education/basic vocational training)

Type of school	Number of schools	Pupils	Teachers according to sex and level of education					
			Total pupils	Women	Higher education	Semi-higher	Specialized secondary	Secondary general
Technical schools	247	116 932	12 155	7 769	9 885	2 042	137	88
Secondary vocational technical schools	226	88 427	5 758	3 077	3 816	1 795	101	45
Vocational technical classes	9	4 051	133	73	67	60	5	1

7. Higher education

According to the Higher Education Act (1995), higher education is provided at all higher education institutions which are: universities; specialized higher schools (academies, institutes, etc.) and colleges (prior to the end of 1995 called semi-higher institutions). The university type of higher education is provided by the universities and specialized higher schools, while non-university higher education is provided by the colleges.

The law makes provision for serious transformations in the higher education system. Most of these have already been implemented. The institutions of higher education are either state or privately owned.

In the academic year 1995/96 there were 24 universities, 17 specialized institutions of higher education and a number of colleges, which are the former semi-higher institutes undergoing changes. Some of them will be closed down, most of them will be transformed into colleges, or integrated within the universities and a small number will remain independent.

Over the last two years, higher education in Bulgaria has marked a considerable increase, irrespective of the unfavourable economic conditions and cut-backs in funding. Thus, for example, the 1993/94 academic year witnessed a 8.5% increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education establishments as compared to the preceding academic year and this increase was 11.5% for 1994/95 and in 1995/96 it was already 14%.

Establishing National Accreditation (in line with Chapter 10 of the Higher Education Act) is intended to contribute to the development and application of criteria and norms for evaluating the quality of assessment in the different education establishments.

The Agency managing this started operations in January 1997.

Admission

The entry requirements depend on the type of higher education institution as well as its speciality and could be summarized as follows: written competition examinations (one or more); tests (which differ in volume and structure); the certificate for completed secondary education ensuring access to higher education. The higher education establishments are autonomous and are entitled to determine some additional entry requirements. Thus they may organize admission for some specific subjects on the basis of presentation of documentary evidence/proof (diploma for completed secondary education ensuring access to higher education) or by combining this with a test or examinations. The admission procedures for each subject are determined annually and are published in advance in the Guide for Higher Institutions.

Courses/Qualifications

At the end of 1996, the following courses were available:

- Colleges offering education programmes lasting at least three years and leading to a Specialist degree.
- The Bachelor's degree, awarded after completion of a study programme lasting at least four years.

- Study programmes lasting at least five years leading to a Master's degree. Alternatively, the Master's degree can be obtained by attending a one-year study programme following the Bachelor's degree.
- The Doctorate, awarded after completion of a study programme following the Master's degree and lasting at least three years.

Academic year

The academic year is divided into two semesters and lasts about 9 months (from October to June). Each higher school is free to set the term dates.

7.1. Universities and equivalent institutions

7.1.1. Universities

Universities provide a wide range of specialization in at least in three or four basic fields of study (humanities, sciences and technologies) and cover a considerable number of scientific areas.

A university can also carry out preparation in one or two basic fields of science and culture. In this case the university's specialization is reflected in its name.

7.1.1.1. Curriculum

Universities give the students the possibility to obtain the following degrees: Bachelor, Master and Doctor. They provide education in vocational areas and specialization, where the unified national requirements are fulfilled. Universities can also carry out teaching to raise the level of qualification. They also carry out research activities for the development of basic fields of science and culture.

7.1.1.2. Fees/Student finance

Fees for those students which pay for their own education are determined annually. According to the Higher Education Act (1995), the Council of Ministers is responsible for setting the so-called state quota of students. This means that the government determines the number of students to be accepted by the higher education institutions and sets the level of state subsidies in accordance with the number of students. Studies will be free-of-charge for students holding one of the places within the state quota. If the higher education institutions allocate additional study places, the extra students, known as private students, are charged tuition fees. This currently applies to about 50% of all students.

The state settles the term fees for education and administrative fees.

Students have access to hostels, grants and free medical care. Higher schools can support students with serious medical problems. Provision is also made for waiving the payment of fees during the training period.

7.1.1.3. Assessment

The studies in each speciality for the Bachelor's and Master's degrees end with a state examination or defence of a thesis. Doctorates are based on an individual syllabus, including the preparation and defence of a Doctoral thesis. The establishments provide higher education but also issue certificates for professional qualifications recognized by the state in those cases where the training of students complies with the state requirements for the respective education degree, subject or professional qualifications.

The methods for assessment and marking the knowledge and skills of students are defined in the curricula and syllabuses. The student's knowledge is mainly evaluated by written examinations as specified in the curricula. Assessment is based on a six-point grading system with 6 being the highest grade point. The mark 1 is not used. A grade point of at least 3 must be achieved to pass an examination (See point 4.1. "Assessment").

7.1.1.4. Academic staff

The academic staff occupy the following positions: lecturers with academic experience are associate professors and professors and lecturers without academic experience are assistant professors, senior assistant professors or chief assistant professors.

7.1.2. Specialized higher schools

Specialized higher schools (academies and institutes) carry out scientific activities and education in basic fields of science, arts, sports and military science. Their names denote their area of specialization.

7.1.2.1. Curriculum

Specialized higher institutions such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other scientific organizations offer an educational programme for covering Doctoral degrees in those specialities which they have been accredited for.

7.1.2.2. Fees/Student finance

(See 7.1.1.)

7.1.2.3. Assessment

(See 7.1.1.)

7.1.2.4. Academic staff

(See 7.1.1.)

7.2. Non-university higher education (Colleges)

Colleges offer a three-year programme for vocationally-oriented education in various fields with a view to obtaining the degree of Specialist. They are mainly incorporated within the universities. They may also be independent, provided they fulfill the required academic and material requirements.

7.2.1. Fees/Student finance

Fees for those students which pay for their own education are determined annually. According to the Higher Education Act (1995) the Council of Ministers is responsible for setting the so-called state quota of students. This means that the government determines the number of students to be accepted by the higher education institutions and sets the level of state subsidies in accordance with the number of students. Studies will be free of charge for students holding one of the places within the state quota. If the higher education institutions allocate additional study places, the extra students, known as private students, are charged tuition fees. This currently applies to about 50% of all students.

7.2.2. Curriculum

There are unified state requirements for all vocational fields and in-service teacher training provided in the colleges.

7.2.3. Assessment

After finishing college, students can continue their training to obtain a higher degree after sitting entrance exams.

7.2.4. Academic staff

The academic staff in colleges are characterized by the following:

- a high percentage of staff have an academic degree (for the academic year 1995/96 this represented 50.4% of teachers);
- a high percentage of teachers do not have an academic degree (for the academic year 1995/96 this was 40%).

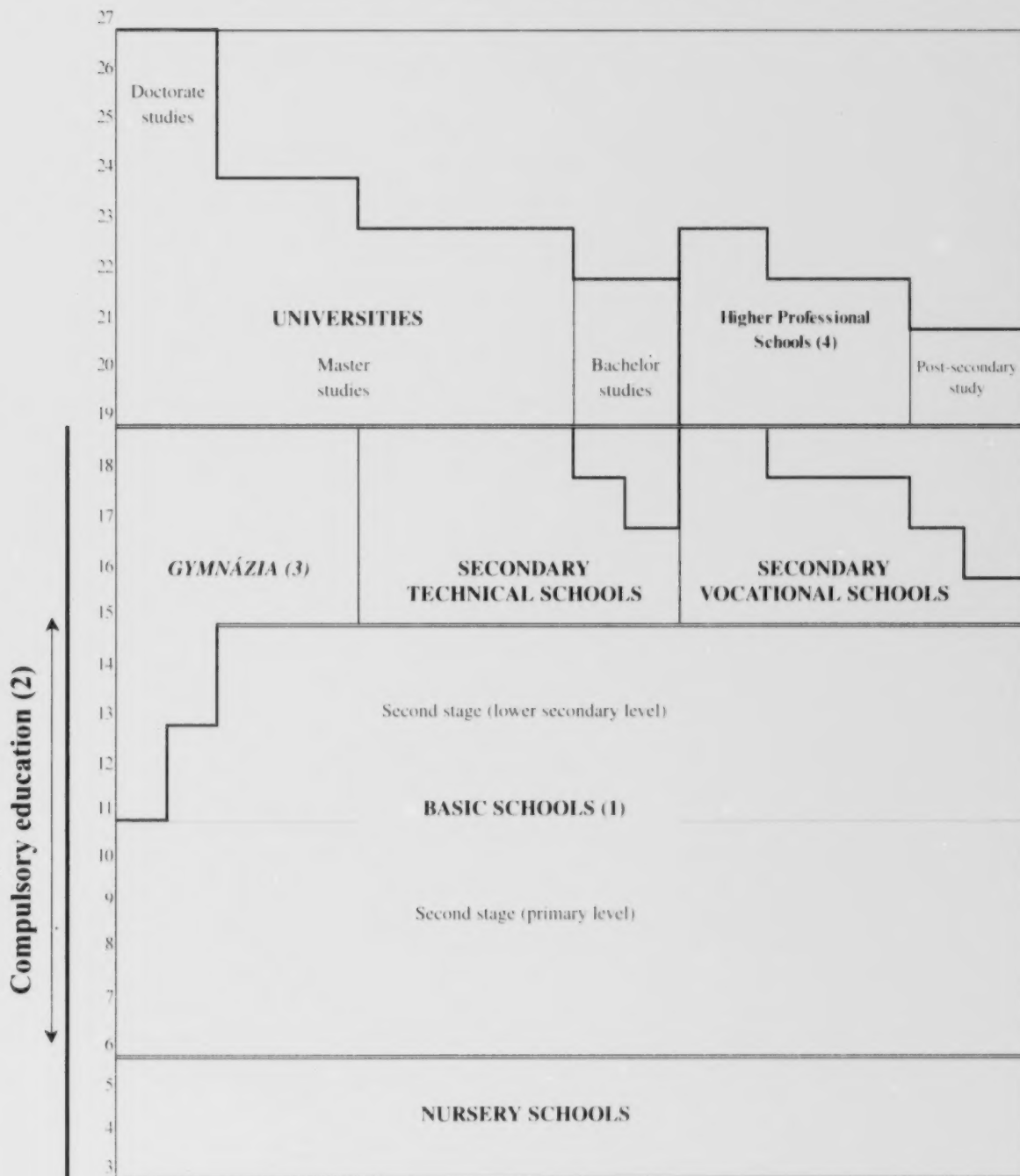
7.2.5. Statistics 1995/96 (Higher education)

Higher Schools	88
Total Students (1st year of education)	248 571
- Full-time students	162 630
- Bulgarian students	67 348
Total teachers	25 339
- Academic staff members	17 110

Czech Republic

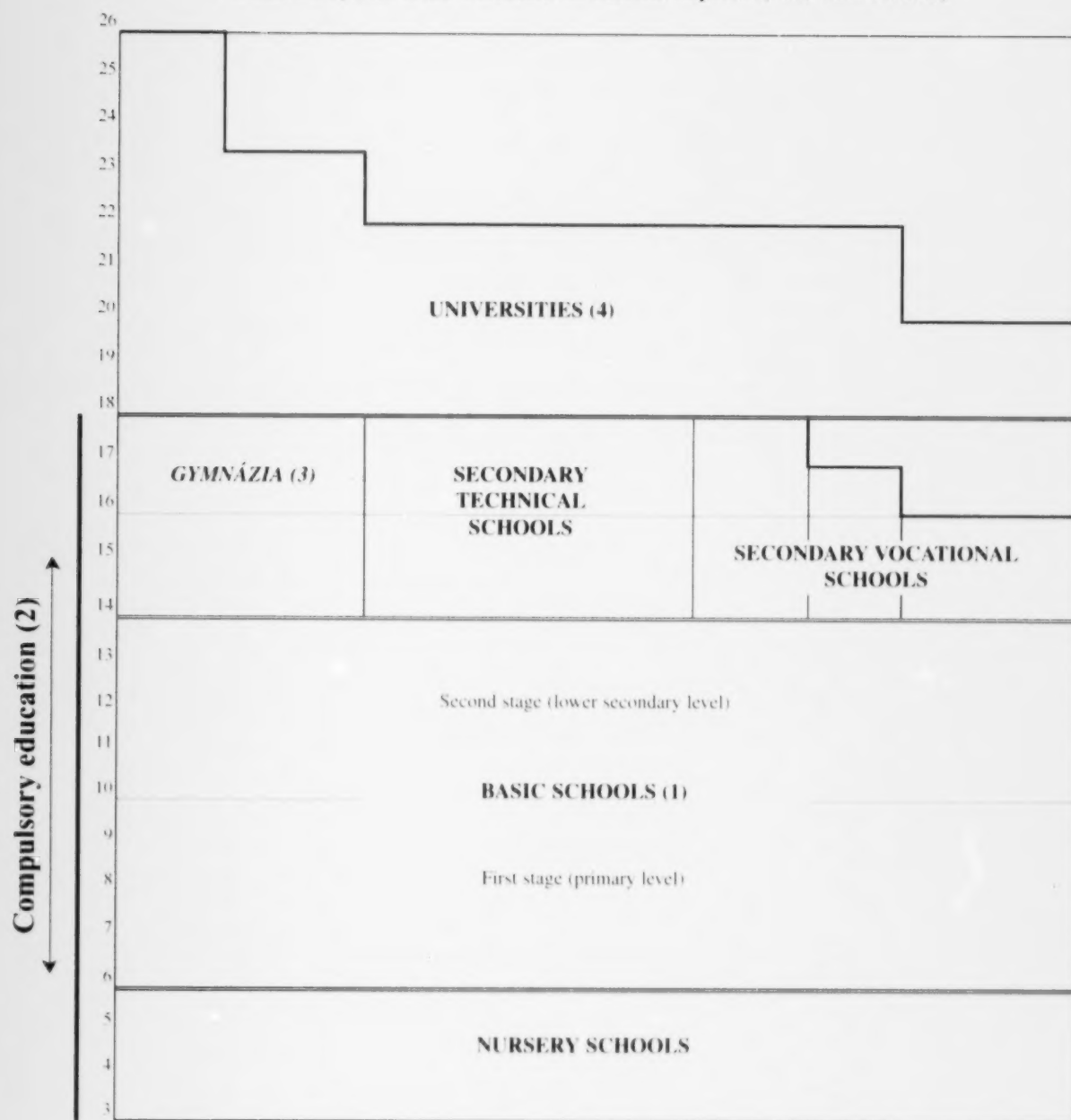
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Education System of the Czech Republic (valid from 1996/97)



- 1) Basic Schools returned to the original division into five year first stage and four year second stage.
- 2) Length of compulsory education is identical with Basic School.
- 3) Multi-year *gymnázia* were re-introduced comprising lower and upper secondary level of general education.
- 4) Higher Professional Schools changed from their experimental status and became an integral part of post-secondary education system.

Education System of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (valid until 1989/90)



- 1) Basic Schools lasted eight years with a four-year first stage and a four-year second stage.
- 2) Compulsory education lasted ten years with two years in upper secondary schools.
- 3) *Gymnázium* represented only upper secondary general education lasting 4 years.
- 4) Higher education only included traditional universities.

Czech Republic

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

The Czech Republic was established when the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic split into two States in January 1993. The Czech Republic is continuing the transformation of its former centralized and planned socialist society into a society operating according to the principles of a market economy and the plurality of political parties, i.e. the process which was launched by the political revolution of November 1989.

In 1994, the Czech Republic had a population of 10 334 000 (as the Czech Republic covers an area of 78 864 square kilometres, the number of inhabitants is 131 per square km.).

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy with a President elected by Parliament which exercises legislative power. The Parliament is divided into two Chambers, an Assembly of Deputies and a Senate. Members are elected to the Assembly of Deputies according to the proportional system and to the Senate under the majority system. Executive power is held by the National Government.

1.2. Basic principles

The Constitution of the Czech Republic, adopted on 16 December 1992, provides a general legal framework for future legal developments.

The rights of citizens and the obligations of the State with regard to education were set down in Article 33 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (the constitutional law approved by the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on 9 January 1991 and incorporated into the legal system of the Czech Republic).

In this way the law upheld the general right to education; the right to free education at primary, secondary and (depending on ability and capacity) university level; the right to state assistance when studying, the development and functioning of private and denominational schools within stated legal provisions and the right of parents to decide on their children's education.

The present Education Act was passed in 1984. An amendment in May 1990 brought considerable changes (the reduction of compulsory attendance at school from ten to nine years, permission to establish private and denominational schools, eight-year *Gymnázia*, etc.).

Important amendments (No. 138/1995) to the 1984 Education Act were adopted by the Czech Parliament in June 1995 dealing with the introduction of a compulsory ninth year in Basic Schools; the establishment of School Councils; the emergence of Higher Professional Schools; the introduction of an obligation for schools to provide public annual reports, etc.

The Higher Education Act (No. 172/1990) was approved by the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in May 1990 giving the universities extensive autonomy, academic freedom and democratic internal mechanisms (student participation in all decision-making processes). An amendment on personnel policy was passed in 1993.

The Law on State Administration and Self-Government (No. 564/1990) introduced a system of school management based on educational authorities and schools' autonomy and established the Czech School Inspectorate. Amendments were approved in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

The Law on Pre-School and School Establishments was published under No. 395/1991 and was last amended in 1995.

There are four key features and principles in response to the general aims of the transformation process:

- the depoliticization of education and training;
- the recognition of pupils' or their parents' right to choose their educational path;
- the break-up of the state monopoly on education by allowing private and denominational schools to be established;
- decentralization in the management of the education system;
- introduction of formula funding.

1.3. Distribution of responsibilities

Until 1989, the public administration system was highly centralized, with national-level branch ministries directly administering different institutional activities and functions and a centralized, single political party exercising external control at all levels and in all matters. The direct administration of education by the national Ministry was provided by the so-called double subordination of local and territorial administrative departments to the elected and territorial bodies and to the Ministry. Following the political changes, the municipal-level administration became self-governing, the former elected bodies at district level were abolished and the different local administrative departments were transferred to the relevant branches of Ministries.

The main actors in the administration of the education system are now school heads, the municipalities (communities), the Education Authorities, the Czech School Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and other central bodies of the state administration as defined by law.

The municipalities (communities), district school councils and school councils are self-governing.

Higher education was given autonomy at all levels of university governance. This is exercised by academic senates and academic councils at the individual schools and faculties and by the Council of Higher Education Institutions for the university system overall.

1.4. Administration

1.4.1. Central level

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (*Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy*) is in charge of most state administration activities concerned with education and sets out the conditions for its development.

The Ministry of Education deals with overall strategy and educational policy and the preparation of appropriate legislative standards and executive and operational activities. It establishes upper secondary and special schools and appoints their school heads. It distributes the financial resources from the state budget. In higher education, the role of the Ministry is limited to the area of university financing and registration procedures.

1.4.2. Local level

New district administrative bodies (86) were set up in 1990 and are called Education Authorities (*školský úřad*). They are directly responsible to the Ministry of Education and are not self-administrating units. They are entrusted predominantly with economic, financial and administrative tasks and, to some extent, with pedagogical issues at Basic School level.

At regional level, the District School Council (*Okresní školská rada*) is elected by indirect voting (between 15 and 30 people) for three years. One third of its members are representatives from the community, one third are representatives of educational staff and one third parent representatives. This Council is responsible for defending the interests of the community, teaching staff and pupils. It has the right to discuss certain matters

with the Education Authorities and to express an opinion on other matters. It does not have any decision-making powers.

The municipalities (communities) responsible for creating the necessary conditions for compulsory attendance are an important component of administration and self-government. They establish, and from an economic point of view, administer pre-school institutions and primary and lower secondary schools (Basic Schools). In larger municipalities, they ensure that school meals are provided and that younger pupils are cared for outside school hours (with considerable financial assistance from the state).

The community usually establishes the Education Commission (*Komise pro výchovu a vzdělávání*). In a community with more than five schools, this is compulsory. Pre-school and educational institutions have a two-fifths representation of educational staff.

Enterprises, factories and cooperatives were important amongst school founding bodies, particularly in apprentice training before 1989. Macrosocial and economic changes led to a gradual disintegration, and the participation of businesses has not yet been revived.

1.4.3. School autonomy

Schools have been given a large degree of autonomy, implying considerable freedom in economic matters, issues relating to personnel and administration and, to a certain extent, also pedagogical questions. School heads were given full responsibility not only for the quality and efficiency of the educational process but also gradually for the financial management of the school, for appointing and dismissing teachers and for relations with the community and the public. All upper secondary schools acquired the status of independent legal entities and this status was gradually extended to Basic Schools and other educational establishments. Upper secondary schools are supervised by the Ministry of Education. According to law, school founders may establish School Councils (*Rady škol*) enabling parents, pupils, staff, and other citizens to participate in the administration of schools.

1.5. Financing

In contrast to the period before 1989, when finances "flowed" into the education system from the state budget via the Ministry of the Interior and appropriate regional and district national committees, the Ministry of Education receives financing from the state budget for educational establishments under its administrative responsibility. Through Act 564/1990, the Ministry of Education distributes financial resources to the Education Authorities and, through them, directly to the schools and other educational establishments for which these offices are administratively responsible. Higher education is financed directly by the state. Formula financing was introduced and is gradually being refined (specific amounts per pupil or student from the state budget).

Expenditure on education in the Czech Republic (with the exception of negligible private funds) is public expenditure. It comprises, on the one hand, funds from the state budget, and on the other hand funds from municipal budgets.

Municipalities contribute a certain amount to finance pre-school institutions and Basic Schools (approximately one-fifth of the total public expenditure on education). Currently local authorities cover approximately 75% of their expenditure from their own income.

Fundamental changes have also occurred in the financing of vocational apprentice training. This was previously derived from two sources – the general education and theoretical part of training was financed by the state, and practical training was sponsored by potential employers, i.e. industry and agriculture. Along with the changes in the status and the economic situation of companies, the majority of them have lost interest in financing apprentices. The present situation is that the state finances not only the academic but also the practical training of most apprentices, known as "state apprentices".

Textbooks and other teaching materials are provided free of charge to pupils (borrowers) at Basic Schools, and also to socially disadvantaged pupils in secondary schools. Others pay to borrow textbooks. Schools can also, on their own initiative, make use of other sources of funding for the purchase of textbooks and teaching aids (sponsors, future employers, etc.).

Private schools have decision-making powers within the framework of the law. Nevertheless, they are significantly limited by their financial resources and therefore the question of financing through state subsidies is extremely important for them. Over the past few years, the generous state contribution was practically comparable to state school subsidies. As of the 1995/96 school year, non-state educational establishments receive lower state subsidies, but if they meet certain set criteria, the funds may be increased.

1.6. Inspection

The Czech School Inspectorate (*Česká školní inspekce*) is one of the key institutions which comes under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. This central control body is operational in the districts and concentrates on activities in pre-school, basic, secondary and post-secondary education. It is expected to monitor education results, the quality of professional and pedagogical management, staffing conditions, teaching materials and equipment, the efficiency with which the funds are used and observance of the generally binding regulations. The Head of the Inspectorate is the Chief School Inspector (*ústřední školní inspektor*) appointed by Minister of Education. There are currently approximately 400 inspectors (*školní inspektor*), most of whom are newly appointed, covering 15 000 schools in contrast to around 1 200 in 1989. Thus 40 schools and a few additional educational institutions are allocated to one inspector.

1.7. Educational consultation and guidance

A system of educational and psychological guidance was developed at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, consisting of regional and district centres. These were supplemented by educational advisers in the schools themselves (teachers who had a reduced teaching load and were paid for these activities).

After 1989, the regional guidance centres responsible for the upper secondary schools and managed by the district centres were disbanded. Now 94 district guidance centres under the administration of the Education Authorities are financed according to the numbers of children attending schools in the respective localities (from nursery schools to secondary schools). In response to the lack of theoretical and methodological background to guidance, the Institute of Educational-Psychological Guidance (*Institut pedagogicko-psychologického poradenství*) was set up in 1994 with 10 staff under the direct management of the Ministry of Education. In addition, at least five private education and psychology guidance centres were established.

Many psychologists in guidance centres began to focus on a more clinical approach, expanding work with individual children, or with groups of children, in an attempt to balance work of a primarily diagnostic character with therapy and re-education.

Some schools have instituted the function of the school psychologist, albeit spontaneously and with no statutory basis or apport.

Career guidance is, at present, the responsibility of Employment Offices (*Úřad práce*) through Information and Guidance Service agencies (*Informační a poradenské služby*), which have been established in forty districts. They focus on guidance on the transition from compulsory education to secondary education and on unemployed young people. From 1 January 1994, these activities have been managed and financed by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs.

1.8. Private schools

Non-state schools (private and denominational) are a new phenomenon in the Czech education system although they have a long pre-war tradition. The massive state support for non-state education resulted in its rapid development. The role of non-state schools is to offer a range of educational options, corresponding to the interests of the pupils and the needs of the labour market and to create a competitive environment throughout the education system. The private schools contributed particularly to the elimination of discrepancies between demand and supply for places. Private schools can be run by either an individual or a corporate body.

Private schools receive a state contribution towards salaries and running costs which is based on the number of pupils, just as it is for state schools. Investment costs and rent for the school premises are covered by school fees and other private sources.

Non-state schools emerged predominantly in the upper secondary school sector. The proportion of non-state schools in this area amounts to 26% and the proportion of pupils to 14% (1996/97). The main emphasis is on the private Secondary Technical Schools (31% of schools, 20% of pupils) and Secondary Vocational Schools (14% of schools, 20% of pupils). Private *Gymnázia* show figures of 22% of schools and 12% of pupils. Nursery schools and special schools also contribute to the growth in non-state schools. Private schools outnumber denominational schools whose preference is for founding *Gymnázia* and new Secondary Technical Schools. There is no separation of Church and State and the denominational schools are given the same state support as state schools and therefore they do not impose any fees.

1.9. Advisory/consultative/support bodies

The system of advisory and consultative bodies is still under development. The Ministry of Education is assisted by several advisory bodies on educational development, different levels of the educational system, recognition of educational institutions, the economy, etc. Various interest groups – professional associations, teachers' and parents' associations, etc. – are also represented.

There are other national public institutions providing education-related services under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education:

The Educational Research Institute (*Výzkumný ústav pedagogický*) focuses on general and special educational needs, including pre-school education.

The Research Institute for Technical/Vocational Education (*Výzkumný ústav odborného školství*) is a coordinating, consultative, expert and research institution working on questions of secondary vocational and technical education.

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education (*Centrum pro studium vysokého školství*) conducts comparative analytical studies on legislation, financing, structural development and evaluation of higher education in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The Institute for Educational-Psychological Guidance (*Institut pedagogicko-psychologického poradenství*) provides support for educational guidance centres.

The Institute for Information on Education (*Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání*) provides educational information (statistics, analysis, documentation). It also administers the main educational library, the Comenius State Library of Education (*Státní pedagogická knihovna Komenského*).

The Institute for Children and Youth (*Institut dětí a mládeže*) is concerned with research and the provision of educational, information and consultancy services on the leisure activities of children and young people. It also provides support for gifted children and children with learning disabilities.

2. Pre-school education

Nursery schools (*mateřská škola*) have a long and special national tradition, influenced by the ideas of J. A. Komenský (Comenius) in the 17th century, among others. Pre-primary education was included in the education system in 1948. State-supported pre-school education underwent considerable quantitative development in the post-war period. At the same time, however, it became an instrument for increasing the number of women in the country's work force, whilst enforcing the principles of collective education and weakening the influence of the family over children's education.

After 1989, a lively debate developed over the role of nursery schools, their new standing in the education system and their educational function. The concept known as a personality-oriented model of pre-school education was enforced by new legislation (Act No. 390 of 10 September 1991). The Ministry of Education decree on nursery schools issued on 17 December 1991 defined the role which corresponded to the new democratic conditions, emphasising the rights of the individual and the child. Nursery schools

must contribute to an increased level of socio-cultural care for children and lay the foundations for their future education.

Nursery schools are administered by municipalities which also guarantee their financing (except for salaries and teaching equipment). Some of them have acquired the status of legal entities, while others are administered by Educational Authorities in the districts. In the case of approximately 68 institutions, they have been linked to Basic Schools. Often, however, this link is purely a financial one.

A positive new element in the work in nursery schools is the practice of having different age groups within a single class instead of dividing the classes according to age. Likewise, the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools is at a more advanced stage here than in the rest of the education system. This concerns about 2% of the age group, mainly with speech impediments. In these cases, the fixed maximum number of children per class (20) is reduced accordingly. The number of children attending nursery schools only in the morning is increasing.

The basic age group of children attending nursery schools is 3- to 6-year-olds. In exceptional cases, where parents have no other choice, it is possible to accept younger children, for whom the Ministry of Health otherwise sets up day nurseries (*děmí jesle*). Currently, there are also older children whose attendance at Basic School has been deferred.

According to the 1993 regulations, nursery schools can charge parents a financial contribution of up to 30 % of the cost of caring for their child. However, some authorities are not making this charge. For the time being, there are insufficient nursery school places in the larger towns.

Nursery schools are usually open 10 to 11 hours a day, and parents can use them according to their needs.

2.1. Curriculum

The programme depends almost entirely on the individual nursery school. Parents can significantly influence the orientation of the programmes and participate in their implementation. Several objectives are being pursued, the foremost of these being the development of the children's personalities, including the broadening of their knowledge and skills, familiarity with the world around them, the development of hygiene and social habits and communication (language) skills. The main components of the programme are spontaneous games and physical activities. Personal development and socialization are also supported by activities related to literary, artistic and moral education. All activities emphasize emotional involvement and encourage a spirit of participation. Outdoor activities and games, walks and excursions are important as well. Nursery schools are moving towards internal differentiation and individualization of their programmes. Foreign language teaching, swimming courses, art groups, speech therapy and programmes for gifted children are also offered.

2.2. Teachers

Nursery school teachers obtain a full qualification from a four-year course with a final upper secondary leaving examination (*Maturita*) in Secondary Pedagogical Schools (*střední pedagogická škola*). There is also the possibility of a three-year Bachelors' course at University Faculties of Education.

The work load for nursery school teachers is 30 hours a week.

2.3. Statistics 1995/96

Pupils	Teachers	Schools	Pupil/teacher ratio	Pupil/class ratio
333 400	28 080	6 480	11.9:1	23

3. Compulsory education/Basic School

Children of compulsory school age (6 to 15 years) attend Basic Schools (*základní škola*). The completion of the 9th year is a pre-condition for applying to study within any type of upper secondary education. The official teaching language is Czech.

Since the 1950s, Basic Schools have incorporated primary and lower secondary education. Their task is to provide pupils with a general basic education, which should be the minimum standard necessary for those going on to further studies of a general or vocational nature. The classes are coeducational.

Since 1990, Basic Schools have been entrusted to the municipalities (communities). Some of them have acquired the status of legal entities and others are administered by Education Authorities in the districts.

Basic School has always been divided into first and second levels. The 1995 amendment to the law introduced a new division of the Basic School into the first (1st to 5th years) and the second (6th to 9th years) levels. In the first level, teaching in all subjects is usually provided by a single class teacher, whilst in the second level subjects are taught by teachers specializing in two subjects or, exceptionally, in one.

Basic Schools with only the first level (primary education) were re-opened in small municipalities, sometimes with only a few classes, in which the teaching of several years is organized together (1 712 with 7% of pupils).

The school year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the next year. The main holiday period is in July and August. In spring, there is a one-week holiday with other short holidays in the autumn, at Christmas, at Easter and at the end of the first semester. The length of holidays are laid down by the Ministry of Education each year.

The school head may open a class for handicapped pupils or plan classes for pupils with learning difficulties for a limited period of time.

Schools for language minorities may exist up to the upper secondary level. The language minorities are very dispersed, with one school in the Slovak language and 28 in Polish.

3.1. Institutional separation at lower secondary level

A major change in the concept of Basic Schools was the decision, in the 1990 Education Act, to found *Gymnázia* with more than 4 years. The decision came about in order to offer pupils with higher intellectual abilities a more demanding education which would begin before the end of the compulsory school period.

This education is intended to be academic, the aim being for pupils to pass the final *Maturita* examination as the necessary qualification for progression to higher education. Enrolment of pupils at these schools is based on the principle of competition and selection.

Apart from the traditional 4-year *Gymnázia* to which pupils transfer after finishing Basic School (see Chapter 4), the 1995 amendment to the Education Act establishes only the multi-year *Gymnázia* with 8-year attendance (only on completion of the 5th Basic School year) and with 6-year attendance (only on completion of the 7th Basic School year).

3.2. Basic School curriculum

Before 1989, the comprehensive nature of the Basic School aimed to maximize the scope of subjects. A considerable proportion of pupils therefore could not meet the demands made on them by the curricular documents and textbooks. At the same time, insufficient opportunity was given for varying the levels of teaching and creatively involving the pupils. Pupils were further overburdened when the school reform of 1976 condensed the five years of the first level of Basic School into four years without sufficiently reducing the teaching programme. In addition, the second level of Basic School became more and more remote from the needs of the heterogeneous pupil population.

The main feature of curricular change for Basic Schools was the attempt to liberalize and diversify education on offer and to comply with the varied interests and abilities of the pupils. Educational standards are the main

criteria when determining curricular policy. They set the general educational objectives and main educational content (core content). They must be considered by educational programme designers and textbook authors and in assessing performance evaluation.

As early as 1990, some necessary changes were made in educational content – the removal of the social studies and history syllabus and textbooks with a heavy bias towards Marxist ideology; the removal of Russian from the list of compulsory subjects; the introduction of a new approach to foreign language teaching (in the 5th year, children may choose as a foreign language either English, German, French or Russian); the processing of an interim syllabus for civic education, history, Czech language, geography and literature.

At the same time new curricular documents were being prepared. There was a new curriculum which came into effect on 1 September 1991 which respects the current division of Basic Schools into first and second levels. The concept and syllabus of the first level reflects the attempt to bring this primary level of education closer to the child's knowledge and experience of the world. The basics of natural science were introduced into the syllabus in a new form. In the curriculum for the second level only the total number of teaching hours is specified for a selected group of subjects (geography, history, natural history, music and art, physics, chemistry) and the school can decide itself on their distribution according to its conditions and aims. Schools may likewise choose how much time above the specified minimum is spent on Czech language, mathematics and foreign languages. An important element in the curriculum is the inclusion of optional subjects.

A new curriculum was also developed for Basic School pupils who show a deeper interest in specific areas: mathematics, natural sciences, foreign languages, music, aesthetics and physical education.

Since the 1993/94 school year, some Basic Schools have been experimenting with new programmes. Their curriculum is more flexible, stressing the personal development of the child and diversification with regard to teaching. The schools have to observe the framework of Basic School standard.

3.3. The Basic School Curriculum (Years 1 to 9)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	min.
Czech language	9	10	10	7	7	4	4	4	4	
Foreign language				3	3	3	3	3	3	
Mathematics	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	
Local environment	2	2	3							
Basics of natural sciences + of geography				3	4					
Chemistry								R	R	4
Physics						R	R	R	R	6
Biology						R	R	R	R	6
Geography						R	R	R	R	6
History						R	R	R	R	6
Civic education						R	R	R	R	4
Family education						R	R	R	R	4
Musical education	1	1	1	4	4	R	R	R	R	4
Art education	1	1	1			R	R	R	R	6
Work education	1	1	1			R	R	R	R	4
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Optional subjects							R	R	R	6
Total number per week	20	22	23	24	25	27	28	30	30	

In years 1 to 3, the subjects may be taught in units, not for a full lesson, and all activities may be combined by keeping up the week's teaching time for different subjects.

In years 4 to 9, the school usually organizes the English or German lessons according to the pupils' interests and academic possibilities.

In many subjects – (R) – the number of lessons and their organization is determined by the school head by agreement with the teacher so that all subjects in the curriculum are taught in the given year.

Depending on the conditions in the school, a third physical education lesson may be introduced.

Optional subjects may be introduced in year 7 and in years 8 and 9, they are compulsory. The optional subject is taught for at least one semester. These include a foreign language, conversation in a foreign language, computer science, technical education, technical drawing, introduction to economics, economics and accountancy, social science seminar, natural sciences seminar and administrative services. This list of optional subjects may be extended by the headteacher in accordance with the specific facilities and staffing of the school and the interests of the pupils, on condition that they observe the Basic School standard.

As of year 1, non-compulsory subjects can be introduced in addition to the week's lessons. The school head is free to draw up the subjects in consultation with the teachers and according to pupils' interests. Recommended non-compulsory subjects are:

- for year 1 – preparation for singing;
- for years 1 to 4 – individual speech therapy;
- for years 2 to 9 – choral singing;
- for years 6 to 9 – playing a musical instrument, literary-dramatic education, art education, foreign language, specialized courses (first aid, photography);
- for years 1 to 9 – religious education, physical education and sport, specialized physical education/sports.

3.4. Textbooks

During the course of 1990-94, the established arrangements for the editing and use of textbooks and teaching aids in Basic Schools and upper secondary schools were terminated. The Ministry of Education currently leaves the production of textbooks to independent publishers, who offer their publications to schools via the market. However, the Ministry maintains its control over the content of textbooks and the methods they use by assessing their quality and issuing written notes of approval, which permit schools to purchase them from centrally allocated funds. It is within the competence of the school to decide which textbooks to use in which subject area (including those without ministerial approval). Even though in many cases publishers are concentrating on re-editing or revising old textbooks, the way has been opened for the preparation of alternative text book themes and thus for new approaches and didactic innovations.

3.5. Assessment

Pupils' knowledge is continuously assessed on the basis of written and oral work and homework, classified by means of a scale: 1 (excellent), 2 (very good), 3 (good), 4 (satisfactory) and 5 (fail). Pupils receive reports at the end of the first and second semesters. After 1990, the use of oral assessment, after an agreement with parents, became widespread in many schools, especially in the younger classes, and was later (September 1993) officially authorized by a decree from the Ministry of Education. Around 8% of teachers at the first level of Basic school use this type of assessment, although the majority use it either in individual cases of pupils with disabilities or as a supplement to the usual assessment system.

There are regular meetings at which parents are informed as to the progress of their child. There is no final examination at the end of Basic School. Pupils move up from one year to the next on the basis of their results. The school head decides if a pupil who fails has to repeat the year.

3.6. Teachers

See Chapter 5.

3.7. Statistics 1995/96

	Both levels	First level	Second level
Pupils		522 800	481 700
Teachers		25 900	37 100
Schools	4 212		
Pupil/teacher ratio	15.9:1		
Pupil/class ratio	22		

4. Post-compulsory education (upper secondary education)

Upper secondary education is a multi-structured but internally coordinated system guaranteeing education and practical vocational training for almost the entire population of young people following the completion of compulsory education and before they take up employment or continue in higher education. All secondary schools acquired the status of legal entities after 1990.

Responsibility for creating national curricula for state education still lies with the Ministry of Education. It entrusts this task to the relevant bodies, coordinates their work and approves the final documents. Informal groups of teachers, teacher organizations and independent professional associations have all contributed to the innovations in existing curricula and the creation of new ones. Documents, most of which are prepared in institutes of educational research and development, are discussed in representative committees made up of professionals from universities, Academy of Science institutes and schools. Key curricular documents have also been discussed with publishers.

The 1995 amendment to the Education Act allows for the existence of different types of curricular documents. These may have the character of more complex documents, but must contain the most important educational objectives, the overall structure of the subject matter and an enumeration and brief description of individual subjects or unit content. They must still be approved by the Ministry.

The task of post-compulsory upper secondary schools is twofold: to prepare pupils for employment or for activities within the national economy, administration, culture, the arts or other areas of life (the "terminal function") or to prepare pupils for a continuation of their studies in higher education (the "transfer function").

Secondary schools are divided into the following four types, between which there is some overlapping (especially in VOTEC).

The **Secondary General School** (*Gymnázium*), so named in keeping with central European tradition. Study at the *Gymnázium* is completed with the final examination (*Maturita*), success in which means that the pupil has completed "full secondary education" (*úplné střední vzdělání*).

The **Secondary Technical School** (*Střední odborná škola*). The majority of pupils complete their studies with the *Maturita* and have then completed "full secondary technical education" (*úplné střední odborné vzdělání*). In international classification, this corresponds to school-based technical/vocational education.

The **Secondary Vocational School** (*Střední odborné učiliště*) mainly offers "vocational courses" (*učební obory*) – apprentice training – for skilled manual occupations ending with a final apprenticeship examination. The level of education attained is known as "secondary vocational education" (*střední odborné vzdělání*). Schools of this type also train some of their pupils in professional courses ending with the *Maturita* examination. The level of education which they attain is thus known as "full secondary technical education". In international classification this corresponds to school-based and work-based technical/vocational education.

The **Integrated Secondary Technical/Vocational Schools** (*integrované střední školy*) provide the same type of education as both technical and vocational schools.

Education at secondary schools is organized either as full-time study or as courses for employed people (evening, correspondence, external) or combined courses. Full-time and on-the-job studies are formally considered to be of equal value, but interest in the latter has fallen considerably since 1989.

In order to adapt the structure and the capacity of the system to the trends in population development, the Ministry of Education launched the process of "optimalization" in 1997 – the number of upper secondary schools will be decreased (in the form of integration, privatization, association).

Admission procedure to upper secondary education

A prerequisite for acceptance at an upper secondary school is successful completion of the Basic School. All types of secondary school, regardless of the differences in their objectives, are subject to the general regulations governing admission, the form and the completion of studies as stipulated by law and ministerial decrees.

Pupils may apply to one or more upper secondary schools of their choice. Pupils and their parents may consult their teachers, educational advisors within the schools or educational psychologists when making their decision. Basic Schools confirm the pupil's results on the application form and may also write an assessment of their special talents. The pupils undergo written and oral entrance examinations at the school to which the application has been sent, the content of which is determined by the secondary school on the basis of the Basic School curricula and taking into consideration their own educational profile. The results of the entrance examinations (usually in Czech language and mathematics, but sometimes also in a foreign language or, in art schools, in relation to the relevant talents) and possibly also the results of psychological tests are the criteria on which a pupil is accepted or rejected. The decision as to how many pupils overall, and which ones in particular, are accepted lies with the school head. An appeal against this decision may be submitted to the director of the appropriate Educational Authorities. Regulations permit a pupil to change course and to transfer from one type of upper secondary school to another. In each case, the decision rests with the school head and the pupil must nearly always take an examination.

4.1. *Gymnázium*

The autonomy which the *Gymnázium* has acquired has allowed considerable variability in concepts of general education and permits the creation of an individual, specific school profile taking into consideration regional needs and the interests of the pupils. In addition to general courses, *Gymnázia* offer studies with language/humanities or mathematics/natural science orientations. Besides these basic types of *Gymnázium* (four-year and multi-year), there are also the eight-year "classics" *Gymnázia* with Latin, and *Gymnázia* with some or all subjects taught in a foreign language, taking up the pre-war tradition. These were usually five-year *Gymnázia* with a preparatory language year. Sports *Gymnázia* were also preserved for young people talented at sport. *Gymnázia* could also theoretically be established with technical orientations.

The number of pupils qualifying from *Gymnázia* has remained steadily around the 24 000 mark in recent years. The majority continue their studies at university or other post-secondary institutions. Those who enroll at universities represent about 64%, compared with 31 to 32% from Secondary Technical Schools and 4 to 5% from *Maturita* courses in Secondary Vocational Schools.

A decree from the Ministry stipulates a maximum of 30 pupils per class.

4.1.1. *Gymnázium* curriculum

The result of the transformation process is a range of changes of which the most essential are:

- **A change in curricular goals:** a redirecting of their aims towards the generally humanizing and socializing mission of upper secondary general education, towards nurturing spiritual values, the intellectual side of the personality, and aesthetic and moral awareness for pupils. As well as preparation for higher education, emphasis is put on educating pupils in civic skills and on how to live in a democratic society.
- **Changes in the curriculum structure:** After 1990 the principle of diversification took the form of a division of the *Gymnázium* curriculum into three branches (humanities, natural sciences and general). A new curriculum was defined containing minimum teaching hours for all compulsory general education subjects for each year. Variations to this curriculum amount to 25 to 30%. There has been a reduction in the teaching of mathematics and natural sciences and a strengthening of the optional component. School heads are granted considerable powers to shape the profile of their schools by setting teaching hours according to the curriculum at their disposal.

- **Changes in the syllabus** have manifested themselves in a new concept and an extension of social sciences. The teaching of history, geography and literature was liberated from ideological distortion and its content was adapted to objective scientific knowledge and in part to the demands arising from the inclusion of a European dimension in education. The most significant changes took place in the teaching of philosophy and basic social sciences. Language teaching was adapted so that students selected two foreign languages.
- **Variations in the length of *Gymnázium* study:** State *Gymnázia* have a curriculum which in the lower grades originates from the Basic School curriculum and in the upper grades from the four-year *Gymnázia* curriculum. Since the second level of Basic School and the lower years of multiple-year *Gymnázia* now correspond, this should make permeability and transferability possible. However, transfer to the *Gymnázium* is conditional upon success in examinations with the content determined by the school head.
- Private *Gymnázia* programmes approved by the Ministry of Education are oriented towards those subjects taught in too limited a form at State *Gymnázia* to meet certain pupils' needs.

4.1.2. *Gymnázium* curriculum in effect as of September 1996

The number of lessons represent a minimum, to which the school head and advisory boards can add further lessons up to a maximum set by the school head. The letter "R" in this curriculum indicates that the inclusion of this subject in the teaching process in the given year is to be decided by the school head and the advisory boards. The school head also sets the number of lessons within the framework of the maximum total number of lessons. The number of lessons can be relocated from one year to another, but should not go below the minimum number of lessons set for the given year, nor below the total minimum number of lessons set for a subject within the whole four-year study plan.

Number of lessons in years				
	1	2	3	4
Czech language and literature	3	3	3	3
Foreign language 1	3/2	3/2	3/2	3/2
Foreign language 2	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
Latin	R	R	R	R
Basics of social sciences	R	R	2	2
History	2	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	R	R
Mathematics	3	3	2	2
Descriptive geometry	R	R	R	R
Physics	2	2	2	R
Chemistry	2	2	2	R
Biology/geology	2	2	2	R
Information and computer technology	2	R	R	R
Aesthetic education	2	2	R	R
Physical education	2	2	2	2
Optional subject 1	R	R	2	2
Optional subject 2		R	R	2
Optional subject 3		R	R	2
Optional subject 4			R	R
Total of set lessons	27	25	24	22
Lessons added by school head	3	5	7	9
Total	30	30	31	31

Foreign languages are selected according to pupils' interests and the potential of particular schools. Classes can be divided into groups for all lessons. The total minimum number of lessons for both languages is five. Each year every language should be taught in at least two lessons per week.

In mathematics, at least one lesson should consist of exercises. If the subject is taught in four or more lessons per week, the exercises should take up at least two out of the total number of lessons.

In natural sciences, part of the total number of lessons can be earmarked by the school head for exercises. If a subject is taught for only two lessons per week, the school head can use some of the lessons he/she is authorized to add to the minimum total of lessons in order to establish a block of exercises in natural science subjects. The assessment of the added natural science subjects becomes a part of the composite assessment of the appropriate subjects. In physical education the school head can allocate a maximum of three lessons per week – with the exception of sports schools. In this case the total number of lessons per week is increased to 31 in years 1 and 2, and to 32 in years 3 and 4. Part of the subject is a week's skiing course in the first year and a week's sports course in the third year.

Optional subjects 1, 2 and 3 are usually a follow-up to the respective compulsory subjects and upgrade them (seminar, exercise, conversation in a foreign language, etc.). In this sense they form a unit with the compulsory subject and are therefore not independent subjects for the final examination. The maximum number of lessons for optional subject 4 is 3.

Optional and non-compulsory subjects come under the jurisdiction of the school head who is expected to take into account the pupils' interests, the conditions in the school and the needs of the region. The school head is responsible for curricula and syllabuses as well as subject content. For lessons in optional and non-compulsory subjects, the groups may consist of pupils from different classes and years.

The school head, in accordance with the position of the advisory council, can earmark the remaining unallocated lessons for specific subjects (compulsory or optional) included in that school's curriculum.

4.1.3. Assessment

The *Maturita* examination consists of two compulsory subjects (Czech language and literature and a foreign language) and two optional subjects. The examination is in written and oral form. The school determines the content of the *Maturita* examinations; clear and objective requirements are not set externally. (See also Chapter 3.)

4.2. Secondary Technical Schools

Schools of this type were founded on Czech territory as early as the 19th century in the same way as they were in Austria and Hungary. Many of them have a long tradition.

This education was conceived principally as terminal education with the assumption of direct entry into employment at an intermediate level of qualification. The education was directed towards developing the ability to apply acquired technical knowledge and skills to a practical situation.

Secondary Technical Schools (*střední odborné školy*) used to have a very narrow institutional specialization originating in their historical developments.

Secondary Industrial Schools (*střední průmyslová škola*) specialising in mechanical and electrical engineering, construction, chemistry, transport, textiles, food, etc.

Secondary Agricultural Schools (*střední zemědělská škola*) or **Secondary Agricultural Technical Schools** (*střední zemědělská technická škola*) and, related to them, Forestry Schools, schools for gardening, wine-growing, hop-growing, poultry farming and veterinary studies which serve large regions or even take pupils from all over the country.

Secondary Health Service Schools (*střední zdravotnická škola*) for training nurses.

Commercial Academies (*obchodní akademie*) transformed from the former Secondary Economics Schools.

Social Law Academies (*sociálně právní akademie*).

Secondary Librarian Schools (*střední knihovnická škola*).

Secondary Pedagogical Schools (*střední pedagogická škola*) training teachers for nursery schools and for other professions in the field of education not requiring the completion of a higher education diploma.

Secondary Art Schools (*střední umlecká škola*) divided into schools for applied arts, graphics, glass, sculpture, etc.

Performing Arts Schools (*konzervatoř*) music, drama, dance, which unlike the others provide six- to eight-year courses and go beyond secondary level.

New schools which have emerged in recent years are Commercial, Tourism and Management Schools (*školy obchodní, cestovního ruchu, podnikatelské*). The Home Economics Schools (*školy rodinné*) correspond to the pre-war traditional schools for girls oriented towards home economics, dressmaking and child care.

Secondary Technical Schools offer professional courses which were traditionally four years long and ended with the *Maturita* examination. To these were added five-year courses in Commercial Academies and other schools after 1990. At the same time, short two- to three-year courses were introduced which were less demanding regarding pupils' qualifications (especially in the Commercial and Home Economics Schools). They differ from the vocational courses at the Secondary Vocational Schools in that they train pupils for simple administrative and organizational activities. Their final examination is not the *Maturita* and does not confer the right to continue studies at higher education institutions. In the beginning, however, one- to three-year follow-up courses were established, leading to the *Maturita*. The 1995 amendment to the Education Act fixes the duration of study at Secondary Technical Schools at a maximum of four years. Shorter courses and follow-up courses at Secondary Technical Schools remain.

Secondary Technical Schools (especially private ones) have made use of the opportunity to establish one- to three-year post-*Maturita* courses for pupils qualifying from the *Gymnázia* (aiming to obtain a full secondary technical education and be more successful in the labour market), as well as for those from Secondary Technical Schools (aiming to re-qualify in a different area, to secure even more specialized training, or to update an existing qualification). Some Secondary Technical Schools have, on an experimental basis, created a new three-year post-secondary course called the "Higher Professional School" (*vyšší odborné školy*) (see Chapter 6).

Combined programmes have emerged which combine a technical and business-economics education. For example, schools with hitherto narrow specializations are beginning to extend their range of options. The most significant of these attempts is evident in the Commercial Academies, Agricultural Schools, Home Economics Schools and Art Schools.

An important innovation in this respect is the development of some Secondary Technical Schools which abandon their narrow technical or economic specialization and create a programme concept which is somewhere between the general *Gymnázium* and the Secondary Technical School. They are known as "Technical Lyceum" (*technické lyceum*) and "Economic Lyceum" (*ekonomické lyceum*) and aim to offer secondary general education as a foundation for future technical or economic post-secondary studies. The number of pupils at these establishments is currently very small.

There has been a significant shift in the distribution of newly enrolled pupils by area of study with a marked drop in the numbers enrolled in schools for mining, metallurgy, the health professions and agriculture. On the other hand, there has been a marked increase (almost threefold) in the numbers enrolling in courses connected with business or economics, trade, services and administration.

4.3. Secondary Vocational Schools

The training institutions are historically associated with a variety of forms of exclusively practical apprentice training which were, to a limited extent, accompanied by general education. These were later replaced by apprentice schools, whose status was not equivalent to that of the selective schools (*Gymnázia*, Secondary Technical Schools). During the post-war period, schools of this type rose in status to rank equally alongside other upper secondary schools.

Under current legislation, the Secondary Vocational School (*střední odborné učiliště*) is obliged to train pupils for a vocational qualification defined in the official list of occupations. Training is completed with a final examination which does not entitle the bearer to enter post-secondary education. In addition, the Secondary Vocational School is authorized to train pupils "in subjects of general education related to certain demanding manual occupations and certain technical engineering activities of a practical nature". In cases such as these, training is completed with a *Maturita* examination. The Secondary Vocational School became an integral part of upper secondary education and has grown closer to the Secondary Technical School in terms of the way it functions. In the vocational courses in particular, there are further numerous divisions into narrow, specialized occupations. Influenced by the

increasing autonomy of schools and the rise of private education, there has been, however, an increase in the number of additional courses which emerged as a result of demands made by individual schools and employers.

In terms of organization, the majority of Secondary Vocational Schools offer both theoretical and practical aspects of training. There are Secondary Vocational Schools which offer only theoretical instruction or, conversely, independently organized practical training centres (*středisko praktického vyučování*), or practical training workplaces (*pracoviště praktického vyučování*) which are usually located within enterprises.

The participation of businesses in vocational training is developing, particularly at school level. To improve their teaching programmes, the schools co-operate with the labour offices, local enterprises, professional unions and associations and Chamber of Commerce representatives. Business interest in vocational training is also manifesting itself in the way that some enterprises are once again establishing their own (private) Secondary Vocational Schools or organising vocational training on their premises. But the participation of businesses in the financing of vocational training is very low. A typical feature of apprenticeship education is the increase in the number of state apprentices whose training is fully covered by the state budget, to the extent of 93% in 1995/96. (See Chapter 1.5.)

4.4. Integrated Secondary Vocational/Technical Schools

These schools (*integrované střední školy*) represent a new institutional element in the education system. They are able to train pupils in the courses offered in both the Secondary Technical Schools and the Secondary Vocational Schools. Usually they are established by the latter and are predominantly geared towards the vocational fields. The dual orientation provides greater educational choice and allows pupils to switch easily between the secondary vocational and secondary technical courses. At the same time, it provides a non-traditional educational programme, i.e. a programme which allows choices to be made throughout the educational path. Other advantages are the possibility of using the free space in the Secondary Vocational Schools for teaching secondary technical courses, more efficient use of equipment for technical instruction, lowering costs since two types of school can be managed as one legal entity, etc.

The number of integrated schools as of 1 September 1996 was 201. The number of pupils in full time study in 1995/96 was 106 530 and in on-the-job study 11 397.

4.5. Vocational Training Centres

The Vocational Training Centre (*centrum odborné přípravy*) is another important institutional innovation. These centres, established on the basis of both secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools, offer retraining courses for Employment Offices, for people in business and for the general public. They are intended as modern, well-equipped institutions offering both a preparation for upper secondary education and a system of further education for employees. In 1995/96, there were nine such centres.

Technical and vocational education curriculum

As in other sectors, in the period before November 1989, the curriculum of technical and vocational education (VOTEC) was uniform and established at central level in great detail. It was compulsory. VOTEC was systematically divided into education in Secondary Technical Schools and Secondary Vocational Schools. Which schools would teach which fields and how many pupils would be educated in which field was precisely planned. Everything was supposedly in accordance with the needs of the national economy.

A significant feature of the curriculum development of VOTEC is the need to overcome the barriers of the school itself and develop close cooperation with the social partners, especially with representatives of employers and employment offices. Certain competencies and responsibilities should also be transferred to them, especially regarding certificates of apprenticeship.

General and professional education run parallel throughout the VOTEC curricular system. In educational programmes introduced since 1990, the number of lessons in general education subjects have regard to the needs of the field of training as well as pupils' capabilities.

General education in the traditional subjects (Czech language, foreign language, mathematics, civics, history, physical education, etc.) varies according to the nature of the education programme (20 to 40%). In general, the programmes aiming at the *Maturita* are close to the upper limit, while vocational programmes are close to the lower limit.

The average proportion of lessons of the technical/professional component varies from 50 to 80%; in the case of *Maturita* sections in Secondary Technical Schools, it accounts for 60, and in three-year apprenticeships, 70%. The number of lessons in foreign languages and Czech is increasing, and the number of lessons in mathematics is decreasing. In all forms of preparation, the overall number of lessons per year of preparation has dropped. Schooling is divided into 34 weeks a year and the weekly number of lessons is around 32.

In VOTEC the proportion of optional and non-compulsory subjects for subject fields created after 1990 has grown. The curriculum is fixed for 70% of fields. In 10% of the fields, the teaching hours of at least some subjects are flexible and the allocation of subjects into years is not prescribed. The number of lessons on subjects in the fields from which pupils or the school may choose is about 13%.

In subject fields created after 1989, the trend is plainly towards a progressive broadening of the student's profile.

Optional subjects offer opportunities for specific professional orientations in certain secondary schools of commerce, depending on the needs of the region, the interest of the pupils and the potential and specific conditions of each school.

The ratio between core compulsory subjects and optional subjects in the individual years is determined by the school head. The school head can increase the number of lessons (i.e. the number of lessons which represent the difference between the maximum and the minimum number of lessons permitted).

The school head determines the structure of optional subjects and of non-compulsory subjects and the extent to which they are to be taught and their content.

Example of curriculum of secondary technical schools: machinery

Subject	Number of lessons per week for each year			
	1	2	3	4
A. Compulsory subjects	32 (10)	33 (8)	33 (11)	32-34 (9)
1. Humanities				
Czech language and literature	3	2	2	3
Foreign languages	3	3	3	3
Civics	-	1	1	1
History	2	-	-	-
2. Mathematics and natural sciences				
Mathematics	5 (2)	3 (1)	2	2
Physics	3 (1)	2	-	-
Chemistry	2	-	-	-
Fundamentals of environmental protection	1	-	-	-
3. Physical education +	2	2	2	2
4. Specialized subjects				
Technical drawing	4 (4)	2 (2)	-	-
Mechanics	2	4	3	-
Machinery technology	2	3	4 (2)	5 (2)
Computer technology	-	2 (1)	-	-
Construction and operation of machines	-	4 (1)	4 (2)	6 (2)
Automation	-	-	-	3 (1)
Testing and measurements	-	-	3 (3)	3 (3)
Economics	-	-	2	2 (1)
Practical training	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	-
B. Optional subjects	-	-	2	2-4
C. Non-compulsory subjects	-	-	2	2-4

+ If possible, one lesson can be added in individual years

Example of curriculum of secondary vocational schools: car electrician

Subject	Number of lessons per week for each year		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
General subjects	10	9	8
1. Compulsory subjects	7	6	5
Czech language and literature	2	2	1
Civil education	1	1	1
Mathematics	2	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2
2. Optional subjects	3	3	
Foreign language	2	2	2
Physics	1	1	-
Fundamentals of computer science	-	2	2
Chemistry	1	1	-
Fundamentals of environmental protection	1	-	1
3. Specialized subjects	8	8.5	9.5
Economics	-	-	2
Machinery	2	-	-
Fundamentals of electrical engineering	3	-	-
Electronics	-	3	-
Electrical measurements	-	-	2
Maintenance and diagnosis of defects	1	5	3.5
Automobiles and their accessories	1	2	2
Workshop training	15	17.5	17
Total	33	35	35

Assessment

A *Maturita* qualification acquired at a Secondary Technical and Vocational School is regarded in law as equal to a *Maturita* qualification from a *Gymnázium* and entitles the holder to apply to study at any university. These students therefore have become the "core" of applicants accepted at higher education institutions as far as studies of a technical, agricultural, economic or artistic nature are concerned.

The *Maturita* at Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools comprises a written and oral examination in Czech language and literature, an examination in an optional subject and theoretical as well as practical examinations in technical subjects. The content of the examinations in technical subjects is set by the school head and, as at the *Gymnázium*, it does not have the character of an external examination.

Two- and three-year training in Secondary Vocational Schools is completed by a final written, oral and practical examination (*učňovská zkouška*), for which successful pupils receive an apprenticeship certificate (*výuční list*) for the profession which they have studied. The majority of pupils apply for jobs immediately on completion of their studies. Pupils on three-year courses can take a two-year extension course (*nástavbové studium*) leading to a *Maturita* examination after a total of five years of study. The number of pupils continuing their studies in this way has grown significantly in recent times. (See also Chapter 3.)

4.6. Statistics 1995/96

	<i>Gymnázium</i>	Secondary Technical Schools	Secondary Vocational Schools
Pupils	131 600	216 400*	234 400*
Teachers	10 900**	20 200**	10 000**
Trainers			14 980
Schools	361	832***	533***
Pupil/teacher ratio	12.1:1	9.3:1	7.4:1
Pupil/class ratio	28.3	22.6	20.9

* including pupils of integrated schools

** full-time and school heads

*** excluding integrated schools

4.7. Teachers

See Chapter 5.

5. Teachers

5.1. Teacher training

Training for the teaching profession is entrusted to universities. Higher education for the teaching profession is always supplemented by practical experience of varying duration in schools, complemented by a diploma thesis and the final state examination on the basis of which they obtain a qualification certificate and an academic title.

Basic and secondary school teachers obtain their qualifications following Masters' courses. Teachers at the first level of Basic School gain their Masters' qualification after four-year courses, usually at university faculties of education. The content of the courses consists of general humanities subjects, the Czech language, mathematics, and pedagogical and psychological subjects. They may specialize in music, arts, physical education, or in a foreign language.

Second-level Basic School teachers and teachers of general education subjects at upper secondary schools (usually with a combination of two subjects) obtain their qualifications through four- or five-year Masters' courses. These are available in 21 university faculties of education, philosophy, natural sciences, mathematics/physics, physical education and sport. The trend is towards four-year Masters' studies for the second level of Basic Schools, while for teachers of general subjects at upper secondary education, the trend is to study at faculties other than those of education. The studies may focus specifically on teacher preparation or such preparation can be undertaken in parallel with the study of a variety of subjects. Insofar as the preparation occurs in tandem with specific studies, it generally begins after the second year and is usually for three to four semesters. Teachers of technical subjects in Secondary Technical Schools and Secondary Vocational Schools prepare themselves in the course of Masters' studies at specialized higher education institutions (technical universities, agricultural colleges, faculties of medicine, theology and fine arts, etc.).

It is also possible to gain a teaching qualification by following a university qualification with a pedagogical course (usually 2 years).

In recent years, some faculties have introduced single-subject courses, usually of three years, culminating in a final examination and the title of Bachelor. The introduction of this type of study was necessitated mainly

by the situation in language teaching. When Russian was eliminated as a compulsory subject, it became necessary to train, or retrain, large numbers of teachers of foreign languages.

5.2. In-service teacher training

The system of in-service training for teachers was abolished in 1991. The Ministry of Education is preparing a new concept. Until now, in-service teacher training has not been compulsory.

Nowadays, the Ministry is creating regional education centres that offer further teacher training, professional information and librarian services. The education authorities are setting up district education centres for in-service training for pre-school and basic school teachers. Universities offer promotion and refresher training. Scientific societies, professional associations and various private organizations and foundations also participate.

After November 1989, many school heads and their deputies were replaced (in general 75% of all Basic School and 85% of all secondary school heads). For them, as well as for school administrators and inspectors, some universities and non-state organizations offer studies in management and administration.

There are also various types of further teacher training: adaptation training for beginner teachers; refresher training for teachers coming back to the profession after a longer period; qualification training containing upgrading of educational qualifications or educational studies for graduates from non-teacher training faculties.

5.3. Teachers' working hours

The working week of all employees in the education sector is the same as that of all other employees in the Czech Republic, i.e. 42.5 hours. The working week of teachers is divided into teaching hours and hours required for activities related to the education process, i.e. preparing lessons, assessment of pupils/students, consultancy and guidance, supervision, informing parents on the progress of their children, attending meetings, managing departments, libraries, collections, etc. The school head makes decisions about the distribution of working hours.

The teaching load is reduced by the number of hours required for such activities as administration, class tutoring (1 to 2 hours a week), other activities, such as 1 to 3 hours for educational guidance, 1 hour for activities at district level, etc. For school heads, this amounts to between 2 and 26 hours a week, depending on the type, level and size of the school. In higher education, the teaching loads of different categories of teachers are not defined.

1st level of Basic School	23 hours*
2nd level of Basic School	22 hours*
Upper Secondary School	21 hours*

The length of a teaching period is 45 minutes.

* As of 1 September 1997 the teaching load will be increased.

6. Higher education

6.1. University

The Higher Education Act of 1990 became the basis for implementing principles of institutional autonomy and academic self-government as a reaction to the previous strictly centralized system. The Act also created the basic machinery for controlling the quality of higher education through a system of accreditation applied to new institutions and faculties, the introduction of doctoral courses, the appraisal of associate professors and the procedure leading to the appointment of professors. The required diversification of higher education was enhanced by the establishment of three- to four-year bachelors' study courses (Bc. – *bakalář*). By law, the body representing universities is the Council of Higher Education Institutions, composed of representatives of institutions and faculties appointed by the academic senates of such institutions.

In 1991, five new universities were established, four of them being created on the basis of already existing faculties of education or other faculties within their regions. The total number of universities is 23, plus three military academies and one police academy. The total number of faculties is 110. As a result of the growing interest among applicants, higher education institutions are still able to meet only around 50% of the demand for places.

The existing system is based on autonomous faculties which have exactly the same decision-making structures as universities (senates, scientific councils, etc.).

The faculties themselves decide on the number of students to be accepted. The admission procedures differ depending on the school and the faculty. In general, an applicant is expected to have passed a *Maturita* examination. The schools decide independently whether they will hold entrance examinations or not. They determine the forms, methods and subjects of the examinations, which are usually written and oral examinations. Students may apply for one or more faculties.

Higher education is free of charge, but there is lively debate about the introduction and level of tuition fees.

The academic year begins on 1 September and is divided into two semesters: winter and summer. The school year is divided up under the authority of the higher-education institutions. After each semester, there is a five-week examination period. In July and August, there is a summer vacation. Examination results are classified according to the three-grade scale.

The typical duration of studies is five years. Studies end with the defence of a dissertation and the passing of state examinations. In some fields, the length of study is six years (medicine, veterinary medicine, architecture). Graduates receive the titles of bachelor, master or engineer; graduates of the medical and veterinary faculties are given the title of doctor. The engineering or masters' course is followed by post-graduate doctorate study lasting three years, involving independent scientific work.

Around one quarter of all applicants are enrolled in the bachelors' studies introduced in 1990. Doctoral studies have considerably developed and in 1994 they covered a total of 409 fields. The courses are attended by 6 800 students, of whom 2 700 study full-time. This type of studies has almost completely replaced the previous system of research training in the Academy of Science (*aspirantura*).

According to the July 1993 amendment to the Higher Education Act, employment contracts with all teachers (except full professors) are concluded for a limited period of time (2 to 5 years). Teachers are employed and appointed on the basis of a competition. Professors make up less than 9% and associate professors approximately 25% of faculty staff.

A modular structure and various credit systems have been introduced, increasing the range of optional courses, introducing active teaching methods, incorporating humanities in technical fields, etc. The extent of these measures differs significantly according to school and faculty. With the exception of economics and teacher training, there has been no major reduction in the volume of compulsory courses which represent approximately 25 hours a week. Attempts made to introduce changes in this respect depend on the character of the field of study, the library facilities, etc.

The increase in the numbers of students admitted (46% since 1989) relates exclusively to full-time studies. On the other hand, the numbers of on-the-job students have decreased from 19% to 9% in 1989. Higher education institutions also provide various types of paid retraining, re-qualification and upgrading courses.

The structure of the student population by field of study is changing in relation to labour market demand and other factors. Interest is growing in humanities and the social sciences, and especially law, economics, philosophy and theology, as well as the natural sciences. On the other hand, interest in medicine, agriculture and the technical fields is declining.

Accommodation and catering are provided by the higher education institutions. Students pay 23% of the cost of accommodation and 40% of the cost of meals.

The student-teacher ratio on average is 10.6:1 and is increasing slightly. A different situation is found as regards the ratio of students to scientifically qualified teachers, associate professors and professors. Here the ratio is 18 or 19:1.

The major part (three-quarters) of the higher education budget is distributed through formula financing (per capita contributions); capital investments make up roughly 19%. The remaining funds are earmarked for specific purposes. Grants provided by the Ministry of Education are channelled through the Fund for the Development of Higher Education which is administered jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Council of Higher Education Institutions. These funds, which represent about 3% of the higher education budget, are allocated for the development of computer networks and computer software, libraries, certain groups of disciplines, etc. In 1995, two other development funds were created to support technical equipment for research and development. Only exceptionally are schools supported from sources other than public budget sources (especially by businesses). This is mainly because no law on tax exemptions has yet been put in place and there is, therefore, no incentive for sponsoring.

For the accreditation and evaluation of higher education studies, the government founded the Accreditation Commission, appointing outstanding professors and scientists to sit as its members. Since 1992, the Accreditation Commission has conducted a peer review and a comparative evaluation of faculties in related fields.

6.2. Non-university sector of higher education

Post-secondary education with non-higher education status is developing alongside universities.

Higher Professional Schools (*Vyšší odborné školy*), a new phenomenon in the Czech education system, were introduced in the 1992/93 school year at 15 selected Secondary Technical Schools with a total of 1 035 students. In 1995/96, 6 228 students were studying at 49 schools. On 1 September 1996, there were 167 schools.

Applications to these schools exceed the number of available places by 150%.

Their objective is to provide students in three- to four-year courses with a self-contained practical qualification required for successful entry into middle- or even high-level positions and in jobs requiring independent professional work, including qualifications for future entrepreneurs.

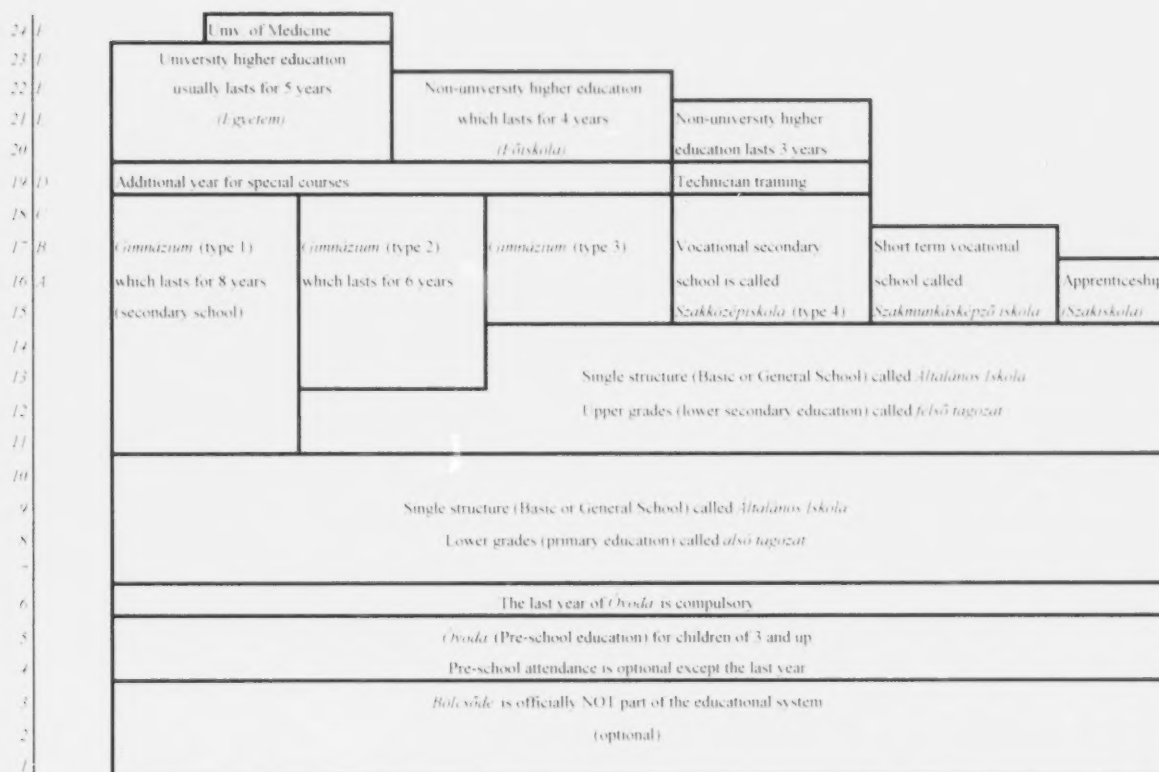
A substantial component of this type of course is practical training in businesses which may take up to one year and during which the students work on a degree-year paper or a project jointly assigned by their school and the respective company. The schools maintain good contacts with their regions and the economic sector and this is facilitated by the traditional sound cooperation between Secondary Technical Schools and the region. Practitioners often work as tutors and also as members of the schools advisory bodies which are basically governed by legislation on secondary education.

The position and status of Higher Professional Schools was considerably reinforced by the June 1995 amendment to the Education Act which makes them a recognized part of the country's education system, whereas before they had only the status of a pilot experiment. The schools are authorized to charge fees.

Hungary

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Hungary



- A Basic examination compulsory from 2002 in a follow-up system
- B Working skills examination and qualification
- C Secondary school leaving examination (*Erettség*)
- D Special oriented courses' qualification and technician examination
- E Diploma of non-university higher education (equivalent to bachelors degree)
- F Diploma of university higher education (equivalent to masters degree)

Basic education (The Basic or General School – *Általános Iskola*) is divided into two parts, though some general upper secondary institutions (*Gimnázium*) include the upper two or the whole second stage (age 10 to 14) in one structure.

Secondary education (*Középiskola*) includes general secondary institutions (*Gimnázium*) lasting four (traditionally), six or eight years. In some cases, an optional year is also available offering vocational training, preparation for university or language training in bilingual schools. In vocational schools, the fifth year usually means further studies in preparation for a technician's examination.

- TYPE 1 = 8-year *Gimnázium* (not yet standardised)
- TYPE 2 = 6-year *Gimnázium* (not yet standardised)
- TYPE 3 = 4-year *Gimnázium*
- TYPE 4 = Vocational school (*Szakközépiskola*)

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

The territory of Hungary is 93 030 square kilometres with a population of 10.3 million. The official language is Hungarian. The population of Hungary is relatively homogeneous; the largest minority is the Gypsy community and the country is constitutionally known as the Republic of Hungary. The Head of State is the President of the Republic elected by Parliament and invested with relatively little political power. Governmental power is exercised by the Prime Minister appointed by the winning parliamentary party. The first free elections under the new system took place in 1990. Six parties constituted the new parliament and three Christian-Conservative parties were able to form a coalition government. The Socialist Party won the 1994 elections and created a new government in coalition with the largest liberal party (SZDSZ – the Alliance of Free Democrats).

Hungarian public administration is extremely decentralized. Local authorities have great political and financial independence. The largest public administrative units in the country are Budapest, the capital, and 19 counties. The power of the administrative bodies at county level is relatively weak in comparison with the power held by the local administrations.

In Hungary, historically, there are two denominations, Catholic and Reformed. In 1994, 9% of the working population was employed in agriculture, 32.4% in industry and 58.6% in the tertiary sector. The unemployment rate is about 10%.

1.2. Basic principles: education

On the basis of the Constitution of the Hungarian Republic and the amendment of the 1993 Public Education Act, the main principles of education are: to enforce the law on equal rights to education; freedom of conscience; freedom of religion and the promotion of patriotism through education; to allow the national and ethnic minorities to exercise their right to education in their mother tongue; and freedom as to what may be taught.

1.3. Division of responsibilities

The main characteristic of the administration of Hungarian public education is its decentralization. The most important features of the system are shared responsibility, the integration of public education administration into general public administration and wide-ranging local and institutional independence.

At central level, the Ministry of Culture and Education takes general responsibility for education as a whole but this responsibility is shared with other Ministries. The Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for administering public education, is also responsible for the allocation of state grants, i.e. grants for public education awarded to local authorities. The Ministry of Employment also has significant responsibilities for all vocational education and educational policy, for coordination with the partners, for the development of the occupations and for development funds for vocational education. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the whole state budget including expenditure allocation and monitoring in the field of education. Other responsibilities are borne by other Ministries linked to vocational education.

The authority and responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which is accountable for the central management of public education, is limited within the present governmental structure. Besides public education, this Ministry is also responsible for higher education, culture, the Church and youth issues. The

Minister may not give direct instructions to school managers and institutions. His authority is confined to general administrative licences and responsibilities – for example, the definition of the requirements for basic education, the upper secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi*) and the registration of textbooks – the supervision of legal regulations, the development of specific areas and professional control over teaching activities. The Minister is helped in his work by under-secretaries who are responsible for both public education and higher education. In the Ministry of Employment, vocational education is also supervised by one of the under-secretaries. Ministers are helped by consultative bodies, the Minister for Culture and Education having two important ones, one for consultation, the other for conciliation. The former is the National Council for General Education, with consultative rights on subjects linked to the development of educational programmes; the latter is the Council for Public Education Policy, which is primarily charged with the reconciliation of the interests of state organizations, school operators and professional and parent organizations. The Minister for Employment works with the National Council for Vocational Education and ensures the participation of both employers and employees in establishing vocational education programmes.

Local government has a decisive role to play in the administration of higher education. In early 1995, there were 3 147 local authorities in Hungary, 2 443 of which operated educational institutions. The responsibility of local authorities in public education is defined very widely. They decide on the opening, closure and reorganization of institutions, specialising in programmes and financial budgets; they oversee the legalities of budgeting and operation; they appoint the heads of these institutions, exercise employers' rights, approve the basic documents of the institutional statutes, including the local curriculum, and finally evaluate how efficient the professional activities of these institutions are. Local authorities maintain some nursery schools, public schools and academic secondary schools (*gimnáziumok*). A smaller number of academic secondary schools are maintained by the counties as well. On the basis of the 1990 Self-Government Act, the powers of the counties are similar to those of local authorities. In the councils of larger towns, separate organizational units, departments or offices are responsible for education while in smaller communities there is usually one executive who takes responsibility for public education. In the smallest villages, where there is no organizational unit or person in charge, it is usually the notary who supervises local education.

The role of the private sector in the maintenance of educational institutions is gradually increasing. Churches and foundations maintain different types of educational institutions, primarily academic secondary schools and colleges.

Since the Education Act of 1985, institutional responsibility has been promoted in the Hungarian education system. Institutional autonomy exists in three main areas: decisions related to organization and operation, decisions related to professional activity, and decisions on the institution's budgeting. Every institution is an individual legal entity with its own statutes, eligible to participate in the national economy according to the Civil Code. Institutions have rights and obligations and are able to contract. They define their own organizational and operational regulations, which it is compulsory for all institutions to establish, within a relatively broad framework of national statutory regulations. One of the most important elements of this autonomy is the autonomous employer's right which is exercised by the head of the institution.

According to existing law, the educational activities of nursery schools, schools and colleges are carried out in compliance with the institute's educational programme, which includes the local curriculum. This curriculum is drawn up by the individual institute and must be approved by the school's proprietors.

The role of headteachers has greatly increased in the last few years. They exercise employers' rights and are responsible for the development and coordination of the local educational programmes, for the organizational and operational systems of the institutions, for their schools' budgets and for consultation with outside partners.

1.4. Legislative process

Education is primarily regulated by the laws on education. Draft legislation is prepared by the government. The final versions are drafted by the Ministry proper (Ministry of Education and Culture), including experts. The proposals are sometimes opened up for public debate. The final version must be approved by Parliament and the Minister is responsible for its enforcement. The decentralization of educational administration began in the mid-1980s and by the early 1990s the state monopoly on education had been completely abolished. In recent years, efforts have been made to make this regulatory process more concise and more transparent and to improve its conceptual basis.

1.5. Reforms

Fundamental changes have been introduced in legislation since the mid-1980s. The Education Act of 1985 declared the professional independence of educational institutions, ensured basic guarantees for this independence and justified pedagogical experiments. The rights of students, teachers, and, for the first time, of parents gained legal recognition under this law. Following the 1985 Act, more flexible regulations were issued on setting school starting times, informal regulations were replaced by public announcements, supervision became counselling and local administration lost the right to interfere in professional problems in schools. By the late 1980s, as a part of the pre-transitional process, legislation began to be harmonized. The 1990 Education Reform Act allowed church and private schools to be set up and thus put an end to the state monopoly of education. Academic secondary schools were also able to add higher elementary classes, which was a revival of the pre-1945 eight-year grammar school.

In 1990, the Self-Government Act increased the financial and political independence of local authorities and ownership of the great majority of elementary and academic secondary schools was transferred to local authorities. The Act on the Restoration of Church Property passed in 1991 allowed property to be reclaimed, e.g. school buildings previously nationalized by the state.

The 1992 Act on the Legal Status of Public Employees declared teachers to be civil servants, with ensuing rights and duties, and defined centrally the preconditions of the employment and salary system.

In 1993, three Acts were passed, the first on public education, the second on vocational education and the third on higher education. The Public Education Act set out basic rights for public education, e.g. the right to establish and operate educational institutions freely, freedom of conscience and the special rights of children. It redefined the system of curricular regulation, which is to be based on curricular principles, according to National Core Curriculum requirements issued by the Minister for Education, and on pedagogical programmes at school level. The National Core Curriculum (officially in force as from 1 September 1998) provides a flexible pedagogic framework for all schools and all cultural domains. Based on the core definition of each subject area, it is up to the schools and the local teaching staff to develop or to adopt local syllabuses and curricula for each class and each subject area. It also introduced a compulsory examination at the end of the tenth year, at age 16, thus making a statutory distinction between public and vocational education at the age of 16 instead of 14. Organizational issues were made matters for regulation at school level. These include the average and maximum number of pupils per class, the number of hours spent at school for the different age groups, and the definition of teaching staff for different types of schools.

The Bill on Vocational Education raised the starting age for entry to vocational education from 14 to 16. It introduced the National List of Qualifications, which defined the qualifications recognized by the state, the requirements of the admission examination and the level and duration of education. It introduced a system of tripartite administration and reintroduced the system of training contracts on the basis of which employers will educate and students will receive education.

Although in 1995 amendments were made to the 1993 Education Act, its basic structure remained unchanged. The amendments concerned three areas: regulation of content, the school system, and the regional public education administration.

Major amendments were passed by Parliament in 1996. This package was primarily aimed at making education more transparent and easily definable and at involving more actors. The various phases of the pedagogical and educational work process, its requirements and the examination system were made more precise. The law declares that, in the pedagogical phase of basic public education, permeability among schools and the disputed idea of uniformity are secured by the National Core Curriculum and by the agreed requirements of the two-level upper secondary school leaving examinations. The National Core Curriculum defines the requirements of school work in different sets of subjects during the first 10 years. Meanwhile, parents' rights have been increased. The law now defines precisely the regulation of employment in the public education sector and has adjusted it to the requirements set by the National Core Curriculum. Professional qualifications are necessary for any kind of employment in education. General school must by law last for eight years but variations up to a maximum of ten years are possible if required. In the ninth and tenth years of primary school, there is an emphasis on general knowledge. Secondary and vocational schools have four-year programmes, but exceptions are also allowed. The law pays special attention to remediation and rehabilitation in educational practice. It regulates schools with a variety of programmes encompassing different types of schools and, at the same time, determines the legal status of the jointly administered public

education institutions. The law defines the pedagogical programme and the school's local curriculum. It also defines the timetable for the academic year and the number of compulsory and optional classes and provides for county authorities to work out a network maintenance and development plan, including local authorities and other consultant organizations. There are strict provisions applicable to the establishment, transmission and abolition of educational institutions. By law, professional control over educational activity must take the form of nationwide surveys. Children who start primary school in 1998/99 or later will have to remain at school until the age of 16, i.e. the period of compulsory education has been increased by two years. Annexes contain rules on the numbers of teachers to be employed in educational institutions on the basis of the numbers of groups and hours devoted to compulsory subjects, the weekly minimum hours and the maximum numbers of pupils in classes and groups.

1.6. Provision

The state is statutorily responsible for the functioning of public education. Public educational institutions may legally be set up and maintained by the state, a local authority, a local ethnic minority authority, a legal Church entity registered in the Republic of Hungary, a company formed and domiciled on the territory of the Republic of Hungary, a foundation, an association or other legal person, provided they have a legal right to function. The state provides free compulsory basic education in accordance with the responsibilities of the state and local authorities as proprietors.

The majority of educational institutions are maintained by local authorities. A smaller proportion of academic secondary schools is supervised by county councils. Churches and foundations also maintain schools. Regarding the number of students and teaching staff, 5% of nursery schools and primary schools and 10 to 15% of academic secondary schools and colleges belong to the private sector. When counting only the number of schools, the proportion of private ones is even higher, e.g. 25% of academic secondary schools have been privatized.

1.7. Administration

Under the Act of Self-Government, local authorities are obliged to ensure basic public education. The government maintains schools and/or guarantees access to schools operated by other authorities. If a local authority has its own school, it automatically becomes the local education authority, with a wide range of responsibilities. The elected body of representatives is also responsible for the establishment and closure of schools, for the school budget and for the appointment of school heads. The local Notary is responsible for legal supervision. In larger communities, there is a separate department for educational affairs, while in smaller communities a clerk is usually appointed to take charge, but many communities have no special staff for education.

The school budget is approved by the proprietor. The budget consists mainly of the grant allocated by local government (partly from centrally transferred standard funds and partly from income from other government activities) and the school may have additional, smaller sources of income. The largest part of the budget is for running costs (heating, water etc.), including equipment and salary costs. There is the possibility of acquiring targeted funds for special and costly capital expenditure. The proprietor (usually local government) is responsible for the size and organization of the school and decisions are taken on educational tasks, local preferences and the use of the budget. Basic educational provisions (the numbers of pupils and staff) are defined in the Education Act. The school head, appointed by local government, employs the staff.

1.8. Financing

The funds needed to run the public education system are provided from a central budget and contributions from the proprietors, supplemented by the educational institutions' tuition fees and other income. The amount of state grant for public education has to be defined by the Annual Bill on the Domestic Budget. The state budget covers contributions to school proprietors (including non-state and non-government proprietors) on a formula basis, i.e. according to the numbers of pupils and the function. The total amount of the annual standard grant transferred to local authorities must be not less than 80% of the expenditure incurred two years ago.

Besides the standard grant, the central budget also supports target investments in public education such as school extensions, sports facilities, textbook publishing, teacher training, etc.

Local authorities are not subject to restrictions on the use of their standard grants. In addition to this support, they can use their own resources to finance public education. They are free to differentiate between institutions in allocating resources to them.

There are different channels of transfers from the economic sphere to the educational institutions. There are grants allocated indirectly through the central budgeting administration, i.e. companies transfer sums to the Vocational Training Fund to be allocated to educational institutions. There are also direct forms of transfers. Companies are obliged to contribute to the cost of vocational training for students in vocational schools. The contribution made is 1.5% of the wage costs, and 1% in the agricultural sector. Companies can fulfil their obligations in different ways: by means of a deposit paid to the Vocational Training Fund, by direct financial support given to one of the vocational schools, or by direct participation in vocational training. Some 80% of the Vocational Training Fund is allocated to the Labour Councils in Budapest and to the counties on the basis of the numbers of students.

The decentralized funds are further allocated via tenders submitted by the vocational schools. The remainder retained in the central Vocational Training Fund is at the disposal of the tripartite organization of the National Vocational Training Council and, here too, allocation is via tenders.

Universities are also grant-aided from the state budget on a formula basis, but they increasingly have their own sources of income also.

Two thirds of expenditure in public education is made up of salary costs, 15 to 20% is devoted to running and maintenance costs, while capital investment and development costs amount to 8%.

According to the Education Act, nursery schools, complementary educational services, primary schools, academic secondary schools, vocational schools and boarding schools are free of charge. Tuition fees, however, must be paid for special educational services and other extra-curricular provision in nursery schools, schools and boarding establishments. Fees must also be paid when a year has to be repeated a third time after the eleventh year, and also for taking the basic examination, upper secondary school leaving examination or vocational examination after leaving school and taking up employment. Books must be paid for, although local authorities do support needy students.

For higher education, a symbolic tuition fee has been introduced which is likely to be increased in coming years.

1.9. Curricular regulation

In terms of content, uniform regulation is based on four pillars: the requirements of the basic national educational programme for nursery schools, the National Core Curriculum, the basic examination at the end of compulsory education after the tenth year and the upper secondary school leaving examination at the end of the twelfth year. The National Core Curriculum is a document issued by the government, which uniformly specifies common requirements for all schools, for different areas of culture and education, for different age groups and different school years. These requirements are designed for the ten years of compulsory education. Compulsory regulations will be issued governing vocational and upper secondary school leaving examinations. The National Core Curriculum defines ten major areas of education and the time to be devoted to each is specified in terms of the proportion and minimum and maximum length rather than of the number of hours. The proportions are based not on single years but on two-year blocks.

The National Core Curriculum (NCC) will be introduced under a special follow-up system and will be introduced in September 1998 in the first and seventh years. Local curricula may also be borrowed from other schools and this will be made possible by an NCC bank, where any school not willing to develop its own curriculum can find one which it can use and to which it can add its own specialities. For the educational programme to be approved, the proprietor has to have the document revised by one of the experts chosen from the National Register of Experts. The National Core Curriculum (NBC) will be introduced under a special follow-up system and will be introduced in September 1998 in the first and seventh years. Local curricula may also be borrowed from other schools and this will be made possible by an NBC Bank, where any school not willing to develop its own curriculum can find one which it can use and to which it can add its own specialities.

Pupils' performance and progress are repeatedly assessed, and mid-term marks and final marks are given. Since curricular regulation became more flexible, examinations have gained in significance. The basic examination (*alapvizsga*) and the upper secondary school leaving examination (*érettség*) are state

examinations which will be taken according to nationally uniform requirements. (The first basic examination will be in 2002 and the two-level upper secondary school leaving examination in 2004. Until then, the basic examination is not compulsory and neither upper secondary school leaving examination will be a two-level one). The uniform requirements of these examinations can be complemented by local requirements based on local curricula. The state is responsible for specifying and publishing examination requirements and defining methods of assessment. The practical details of the examination are the responsibility of the school. The government has issued regulations defining the upper secondary school leaving examination requirements. Before handing over the regulation of this examination to the government, it has to be approved by the National Council for Public Education, as regards ethnic and minority issues by the National Committee of Minorities, and by the Council for Public Educational Policy. The basic examination is taken at the end of the tenth year and the upper secondary school leaving examination at the end of the twelfth or thirteenth year. In the latter, there are both compulsory and optional subjects. Success in this examination represents the completion of upper secondary education and allows students to enrol at university or college. The vocational examination is also a state examination. Vocational examinations can be taken in institutes approved by the Minister for Labour who is responsible for vocational education. Occupational certificates are listed in the National List of Qualifications and the examination requirements for such certificates have to be set by the Minister for Labour. The examination board is an independent body, composed of a chairman nominated by the Minister responsible for the subject, a representative of the Employers' Federation, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce and a representative of the vocational training college.

The teacher is both responsible for the choice of appropriate pedagogical methods and materials and free to decide which of the books approved and registered by the Minister for Education should be used.

1.10. Inspection

Only those whose names appear on the National Register of Experts can participate in supervising public educational institutions. Professional supervision can be initiated at national level by the ministers responsible for education, at regional level by county councils, at community level by local authorities and at institutional level by the proprietor or the head of the school. The former system of supervision and professional guidance was replaced by this new system of free choice which is not yet fully developed.

Professional supervision of public educational institutions at national, regional, county and capital level must by law be carried out by a nationwide system of evaluation. The tasks and regulations included in this system of evaluation are defined by the Minister for Education. Only national educational service institutions are entitled to prepare this programme of evaluation. Educational institutions and experts participating in the evaluation process are independent of the Ministry. Educational service institutions carry out the pedagogical evaluation, provide advice and assist with teacher training. Parents' and teachers' work is facilitated by a special educational service which includes educational and career counselling, speech therapy, special needs education and physical education.

Careers advice was well developed in the 1980s but the counselling centres were abolished in the second half of the 1980s and these responsibilities were transferred to local authorities and employment offices.

1.11. Advisory/consultative/participatory bodies

The work of the Minister for Education and Culture is supported by two specialized advisory and decision-making bodies at national level. The National Council for Public Education is a group of experts which carries out assessments of policy, research and development issues related to public education. It recommends school books for registration, and prepares an annual report on the up-to-date situation in public education. It has 21 ordinary members and seven alternates. Under the auspices of the National Council for Public Education, permanent and temporary expert committees have been set up. The permanent committees are the National Accreditation Committee for Teacher Training and the National Committee for Secondary School Qualifications. The Council for Public Education Policy carries out the preparatory work for decision-making on education policy. Its members are national teachers' professional organizations, national teachers' trade unions, national parents' organizations, national student organizations, local government organizations, representatives of ministries related to education and representatives of non-governmental institutions. Other professional committees also assist the Minister for Education, such as the National Committee on Minorities and the National Council for Students' Rights.

The Minister is also helped in his work by the tripartite organization of the National Council for Vocational Training. If three or more schools are jointly operated by one of them, the proprietor of that one is obliged to set up a committee for educational affairs.

At institutional level, teachers may establish professional working teams in their institutions. A school board may also be set up, composed of teachers, parents and representatives of the Students' Steering Committee. The proprietor, the local minority government and, in vocational schools, the regional Chamber of Commerce may also delegate representatives. The board may express an opinion on any school-related issue. Senior pupils may form steering committees to represent their interests (self-government).

2. Pre-school education

Children may attend nursery school from the age of 3 and are obliged to attend from the age of 5. For younger children, day nurseries are available, but these do not perform any formal educational tasks and are under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare.

Nursery school is a well developed institution with a long tradition in Hungary. The first nursery school was founded in 1828 by Terezia Brunszvik and such schools became widespread and popular in the 1970s. While the rate of attendance for 3- to 6-year-olds in 1970 was 50%, this rate had increased to 80% by 1980.

Nursery school is an educational institution for children from the age of 3 until they are mature enough to attend primary school, at the age of 6 or 7. From the age of 5, children must take part in activities to prepare them for school for a maximum of four hours a day. In the 1993/94 school year, 90% of nursery-age children were attending nursery school and 92% of pupils starting in the first year of primary school usually have attended nursery school first. Nursery school is free of charge, though there are a small number of nursery schools maintained by the church and other foundations where those attending have to pay. The nursery school aims to prepare children for life in the community and for school and to develop their skills and capabilities.

Most nursery schools belong to the local authorities but there are also private nursery schools. All schools are coeducational. In general, they have three groups of children with an average of 25 children in each group. Nursery schools are usually separate from schools, each group having two or three rooms in a separate building. Working hours are regulated by the proprietor, usually the local authority, and nursery schools are open daily from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.. Nursery schools are open from the beginning of September until the end of June, with one month's holiday, usually in July or August. Staff are on duty all year round. There is also a two-week holiday at Christmas and Easter.

Children are organized mostly by age cohorts, with three groups, one for each year. Since the 1980s, there has been a considerable drop in the number of young children and this group system has therefore been abandoned or else run in parallel with mixed age groups. The nursery school educational programme has to be developed on the basis of the national educational programme. Activities are carried out in a relaxed and playful atmosphere. Children begin preparation for school only at the age of 5. Experts (psychologists, speech therapists, etc.) monitor the children at this stage to ascertain whether they are ready to move on to primary school, and a final decision is made by the nursery school. Nursery schools and schools are not always in close contact.

There are two nursery teachers and one assistant in each group. Hungarian nursery teachers are well trained and in the early 1990s three quarters of them had college diplomas. Since the 1993 Act, a secondary school leaving certificate is no longer considered adequate or recognized. Nursery teachers are given a three-year college education and, since the 1996 reform of the law, they have been obliged to take a professional examination. They are classified as state employees.

Statistics 1995/96

Nursery schools	4 720
Nursery teachers	32 330
Nursery school children	399 300
Nursery teachers per group	2.04
Children per group	25.3

Source: *Statistical Yearbook*, 1996, Central Statistical Bureau.

3. Compulsory education

Compulsory education is regulated by the Public Education Act of 1993, the Vocational Training Act, the 1995 and 1996 Amendments to the Public Education Act and the 1995 Amendment to the Vocational Training Act.

Children reaching the age of 5 are obliged to attend nursery school and participate in the preparatory education for school. Children start school in their sixth year, except those born after 31 May. Compulsory education ends in the pupil's sixteenth year. In the first ten years at school, pupils receive basic education and at the end of this period they take the basic examination. Compulsory education may also be completed at academic secondary school or at a vocational school. Under the amendment of the law, from 1998 compulsory education will continue until the pupil's eighteenth year, but this does not necessarily mean that this period has to be completed with the upper secondary school leaving examination: any kind of vocational qualification would be satisfactory.

4. Primary education

The eight-year "general school" (*Általános Iskola*), was set up in 1945 by order of the Minister as the basic institution for compulsory education. This decree ordered the merger of the four-year elementary school (lower section) with the first four years of different middle schools and secondary schools (upper section). Thus, the upper section was established by the amalgamation of the following:

- upper section of the city elementary school;
- the four-year secondary school (*polgári*);
- lower section of the *gimnázium*.

Although the 1993 Education Act replaced the eight-year "general school" (*Általános Iskola*) by the ten-year "general school" (*Általános Iskola*), the 1995 Amendment to this Act restored the eight-year "general school" (*Általános Iskola*) as the basic model, with scope for modification if required. The reason for this was that, for demographic and financial reasons, the great majority of primary schools did not even have eight classes. In exceptional cases, the law permits a maximum of 10 years. This is, therefore, feasible in any kind of elementary education and the National Core Curriculum was prepared for just such a purpose. Most general schools offer eight years but, at the beginning of 1993, more than one fifth of them offered less than this.

The first four years of elementary education are compulsory. Compulsory education may then be completed either in the upper section of the primary school or in the corresponding years in academic secondary schools. Most pupils still complete eight years in the general school but some of them start secondary school at the age of 10 or 12. The age group for the eight-year primary school is between 6 and 14 years. Attendance was made more flexible by the Education Act of 1985, therefore there are pupils who have completed eight years of school by the age of 15, having started at the age of 7. Increasingly, pupils finish primary school at the age of 16. In 1993/94, the proportion doing so was slightly more than 96%.

The basic requirement for attending primary school is a nursery school certificate, but the law also provides for individual entrance examinations to be taken. This often happens, since parents increasingly want to have their children educated in schools other than their local schools. On the other hand, local schools must take pupils who are eligible and who live in the area. By law, elementary education is free of charge. Private schools may charge fees but, where they have an agreement with the local authority for that authority to provide financial assistance towards the cost of public education, fees cannot be charged.

The main task of the general school is to provide basic cultural education, to prepare pupils for the basic examination and to guide them towards the career which is best suited to their interests, capabilities and talents. General schools are coeducational.

Schools vary in size depending on the community they serve. There is, however, a trend for them to decrease in size owing to the decrease in the pupil population and the increase in the variety and number of schools. The average size was 268 pupils per school in 1993/94 but half of all schools were attended by less than 200 pupils and one quarter of them had less than 100 pupils. General schools can be found in both villages and towns. They are generally not attached to nursery schools or academic secondary schools but many of them operate special classes in the ninth and tenth years to provide vocational education for less well-off pupils, often with special needs, who otherwise would not be able to attend any of the general or vocational secondary schools. There are also some training schools attached to teacher training colleges.

Education is given in the morning, while in the afternoon the school offers special classes and accommodates the pupils for the rest of the day. There is no shortage of facilities since many local authorities built new schools in the early 1990s, in spite of the fact that the numbers of children were already falling at that time. Following an amendment to the law in 1996, the academic year for all levels consists of 185 days. The same amendment determines the maximum time to be spent at school daily: for years 1 to 3, it cannot be more than four hours and for years 4 to 6, four or five hours. The weekly average must not exceed four-and-a-half hours per day. Finally, in years 7 and 8, the maximum is five hours daily. The school can also organize extra non-compulsory activities, the time spent on which may not exceed 10% of the total time spent at school in years 1 to 3, 25% of the total time spent at school in years 4 to 6 and 30% for years 7 to 8. Classes are organized according to age.

4.1. Curriculum

Curricula and timetables for primary schools were introduced at the same time as the major educational reform in 1978, but many modifications have been made since then. Central supervision of curricula was reduced during the 1980s. Alternative programmes have appeared and many local initiatives have been implemented.

Schools are free to define their own timetables and the actual time devoted to different subjects may vary. The timetable presented here is typical and corresponds to the official Ministry recommendation from the end of the 1980s. With the introduction of the 1993 Education Act, the curricula and timetables which were formerly defined centrally are no longer compulsory. The National Core Curriculum, introduced in a follow-up system, specifies only five main areas of culture and education and defines only a percentage of the time for each group of classes.

Area	Percentage in years 1-4	Percentage in years 5-6	Percentage in years 7-8
Hungarian language and literature	32-40	16-20	11-13
Modern languages		11-15	9-12
Mathematics	19-23	16-20	10-14
Social sciences	4-7	5-9	10-14
Natural sciences	5-9	8-12	16-22
Geography and Environmental studies			4-7
Arts and Crafts	12-16	12-16	9-12
Computer studies		2-4	6-7
Lifestyle and practical skills	4-7	5-9	6-10
Physical education and sport	10-14	9-13	6-10

Areas of the National Core Curriculum can be converted into subjects in different ways. The requirements set by the National Core Curriculum have to be met over a two-year period, therefore different schools can teach the same subject in different ways and at different rates.

In many schools, there are particular subjects which are optional, which means that, if these subjects are chosen, more time is allocated to them. Optional subjects are primarily physical education, singing and music, art, and modern languages.

Although there is no separate careers adviser in primary schools, the number of optional subjects increases in the last two years in order to assist pupils to prepare for and construct their future educational path.

There are many different educational methods and teachers are free to choose the most appropriate. The methods chosen, however, must be discussed with the headteacher and staff. The range of school books has also been extended recently and there is no definite rule as to which one has to be chosen, which leaves teachers with a free choice.

Contact with the local community is enriched by regular communication with parents and local government officials. Interaction with local economic groups is seldom effective.

4.2. Assessment

Pupils' performance and progress are regularly assessed during the school year and mid-term and final marks are given in each subject. Mid-term and final marks are based on continuous assessment. An assessment is usually given of individual performance. Pupils may be assessed in written or oral form, sometimes via tests. Marks are as follows: excellent (5), good (4), satisfactory (3), acceptable (2) and fail (1). A staff meeting is held to review the final marks given to each pupil by the subject teachers and the class teacher at the end of the school year and which determine whether the pupil moves up to the next class. Pupils are promoted only if the necessary requirements have been met, otherwise the year must be repeated.

On completion of primary school, pupils are not required to sit an examination, nor do they receive a leaving certificate. As the law stands at present, the period of compulsory education is ten years and therefore pupils must move up to the next type of school. Successful completion of compulsory education is attested by a basic examination certificate. In primary schools, there is no careers service but the class teacher may help pupils on a voluntary basis. Because of the decline in interest on the part of the institutions in recent years, the number of careers advisers has also gone down and responsibility for any further advancement thus lies almost entirely with the parents.

The 1990 amendment to the 1985 Education Act allowed academic secondary schools to extend "downwards", i.e. six- and eight-year academic secondary schools were established in place of the former four-year ones. The reason for this was the declining numbers of children, which forced schools to find new methods to reach the required number of pupils. For this new type of academic secondary school, the licensing procedure was quite liberal and the schools quickly increased in number. The dividing line between primary and secondary education has become blurred. The growth in academic secondary school attendance by pupils aged between 10 and 14 has been a major challenge for primary schools. The first possibility for enrolment in secondary education is at the age of 10, when pupils may leave primary school after finishing the fourth year and move to the first year of an eight-year secondary school. Some 3% of pupils did this in 1994. The second possibility is to transfer to the first year of a six-year secondary school. The attendance rate at the age of 12 was 4 to 5% in 1994. This is becoming an increasingly frequent choice. The great majority though, have to make a decision after finishing the eight-year primary school, i.e. at the age of 14. In the 1995/96 school year, 99.4% of pupils continued at secondary school, 27.1% of them in academic secondary school, 33.7% in secondary vocational school, 34.2% in vocational training school and 4.4% in other vocational schools. Continuation in education primarily depends on achievements in the primary school. Better pupils usually continue in the academic secondary schools and pupils whose results are not so good choose vocational education. Those who do not qualify for entrance to either establishment may continue in special vocational schools. These schools offer a two-year training course in a special field. Although no certificate is given, they provide pupils with better prospects for entry to the labour market.

4.3. Teachers

Teachers in the lower section of primary school (years 1 to 4) are usually specialists in the 6- to 10-year-old age group and become "headteachers" of a class for 2 or 4 years. In the upper section (years 5 to 8), teachers

are college graduates. According to the new 1996 Amendment of the Public Education Act, a college or university qualification is needed to teach academic subjects or a special field specified in the National Core Curriculum throughout all of elementary education. Teachers are trained for three or four years in teacher training colleges and receive a diploma. Teachers also specialize in one subject. They are trained mainly for years 1 to 6 of primary school. School teachers may also be university graduates. They are state employees. The issue of graduate training has not yet been resolved. They usually attend a one- or two-day course at some time during the year, but this is not compulsory. Since the 1996 Amendment of the law, graduates have been obliged to take a professional examination which means that professional training is also compulsory. Work is in progress to develop curricula and training courses at present.

4.4. Statistics

In 1993/94, 81.4% of pupils completed primary school at the age of 14, 10.7% at the age of 15 and 4% at the age of 16. Some 96% of the total population of 16-year-olds completed eight years of primary school.

1995/96

Schools	3 809
Classrooms	48 615
Teachers	86 891
Classes	46 425
Regular pupils	974 800
Pupils per classroom	20.1
Pupils per class	21
Pupils per teacher	11.2

5. Secondary education

Of all the branches of education in Hungary, the secondary education system has undergone the greatest amount of change in recent years. The duration of school attendance is being increased in academic secondary and vocational schools, with the academic secondary schools extending "downwards" and secondary vocational schools extending "upwards". Another phenomenon is the emergence of new mixed schools offering different types of secondary education. The most frequent combination is that of the secondary vocational school and vocational training school which aims to raise the prestige of vocational education and make it more popular. The vocational training schools are less and less able to meet the requirements of the labour market and are also losing prestige. The increase in the number of educational institutions leading to the upper secondary school leaving certificate is not specific to Hungary but characteristic of the whole region. But it is true that in Hungary this increase is occurring in vocational education.

Within the changing Hungarian school system, the term "secondary school" traditionally referred to those schools taking pupils who have completed compulsory education, although internationally this level is considered to be the upper level of secondary education. Secondary educational institutions differ in two respects: whether they offer general or vocational education and whether they issue upper secondary school leaving certificates (*érettségi*). The typical institutions offering general education and an upper secondary school leaving certificate are known as academic secondary schools (*gimnáziumok*) and these may be attended for periods of four, five, six or eight years.

The type of school which provides vocational education and also leads to the upper secondary school leaving certificates is the secondary vocational school which consists of three different institutions:

- five-year technical secondary school for training in technical subjects;
- four- or five-year secondary vocational school providing training mainly for the service industries;

- four-year vocational training school issuing both upper secondary school leaving and vocational certificates.

5.1. Academic secondary school (*gimnázium*)

This type of school developed from the German general, academic secondary school in the last century and acquired its legal status in Hungary under a decree issued by the Austrian authorities following the 1848 revolution. Until the Second World War, it preserved its main features, i.e. an eight-year system and an upper secondary school leaving certificate giving pupils entry to higher education. Following the Second World War, the institution was completely restructured: its lower section (years 1 to 4) was abolished and grafted on to primary education and a new type of school was created from the upper section, thus opening the institution up to larger social groups. After some ups and downs, attendance began to increase by the middle of the 1980s and from the early 1990s new variations appeared (six- and eight-year academic secondary schools). Legally, the institution has invariably been declared to be a four-year school.

Academic secondary schools provide general education, prepare pupils for entry to college, and also provide qualifications for certain jobs. Their most traditional role has been preparation for continued study in higher education, but preparation for entering the labour market has also gained in importance.

Some 27.1% of primary school pupils proceeded to academic secondary school in 1995/96. Approximately 28% of school children aged between 14 and 17 study in this type of school. The drop-out rate is about 10%, which is relatively low compared to that of other secondary schools. Since this has become a very popular type of school, it is frequently over-subscribed. In most academic secondary schools, there are entrance examinations. Education in these schools is basically free of charge according to the Amendment of 1996. Private academic secondary schools, which are mostly maintained by the Church, may charge fees if they do not have an agreement giving them a public education grant from the local government. Extra-curricular activities and study groups outside school hours have to be paid for.

The majority of academic secondary schools, like the other types of schools, are coeducational. The average capacity of academic secondary schools is 350 pupils. There are also academic secondary schools attached to teacher training colleges and here the standard of education is usually high.

Academic secondary schools operate in separate premises but are sometimes combined with other institutions, for example secondary vocational schools. There are at least as many classrooms as there are classes. The school week consists of five days, with classes in the morning. According to the latest Amendment to the law, in years 9 and 10, working hours should not exceed a daily average of five-and-a-half hours, and from year 11 they should not exceed six hours. Time spent on non-compulsory activities must not exceed 35% of weekly school hours in years 9 and 10 and 60% in years 11 to 13. The timetable for the year is prescribed by the Minister.

Academic secondary schools may organise adult education evening courses.

Classes are organized according to age or sometimes according to subject.

5.1.1. Curriculum

Since the last reform of the curriculum, optional subjects may also be taught in the third and fourth years of secondary school. These are intended to train pupils in specific job-related skills. Half of the academic secondary schools have specific curricula and timetables. In the second half of the 1980s, some academic secondary schools were converted into bilingual secondary schools in which some subjects were taught in a foreign language. The Education Act of 1985 allowed schools wanting to introduce special variations to apply to the Ministry for approval. As a result, the number of individual varieties has increased considerably. The major innovations were:

- a distinction between humanities and sciences;
- special foreign language studies;
- computer science;
- the introduction of certain integrated subjects.

According to the 1996 Amendment, the structure and requirements of the curricula for years 9 and 10 must be in accordance with the National Core Curriculum.

Educational area	Percentage proportion in years 9 and 10
Hungarian language and literature	11-13
Modern languages	9-13
Mathematics	10-14
Social sciences	10-14
Natural sciences	15-20
Geography and Environmental studies	4-7
Arts and Crafts	9-12
Computer studies	4-7
Lifestyle and practical skills	5-9
Physical education and sport	6-10

According to the 1996 Amendment, pupils must take national standardized basic examinations at the end year 10. From year 11, the timetable will not even be set in advance and the reference will be the requirements of the upper secondary school leaving examination. Common requirements for the basic examination are defined by the National Core Curriculum. The basic examination certificate attests pupils' basic skills and knowledge. This certificate allows pupils to continue to study or to apply for a job.

Pupils may study different subjects at different levels. This is particularly the case in specialist secondary schools which have more time and materials at their disposal for pupils to acquire specific skills and knowledge, and for academic secondary schools in general, where there are optional subjects in the last two years.

Teachers in academic secondary schools are free to choose their teaching methods and their books. However, prior discussion is required with the headteacher and other members of staff.

5.1.2. Assessment

The assessment process is the same as in primary education (see above). Studies in secondary schools are completed with the upper secondary school leaving examination. This is an examination held in the school before an examining board made up of teachers from the school and chaired by a delegate from the education authority. Upper secondary school leaving examinations have to be taken in five subjects, three of them compulsory (mathematics, Hungarian language and literature, and history) and two optional (chosen from modern languages, chemistry, physics, geography and biology). The examination consists of a written part (centrally prepared mathematics tests and an essay on a theme taken from Hungarian literature) and an oral part. Tests and essays are corrected and marked by teachers from the school. The upper secondary school leaving examination allows, but does not guarantee, admission to higher education, since colleges and universities have their own entrance examination requirements. The National Core Curriculum changes the examination system by prescribing upper secondary school leaving examinations at two levels, standard and advanced, in the given subject. The advanced upper secondary school leaving examination, if passed, would allow admission to higher education without an entrance examination. It is important to note that combined upper secondary school leaving and entrance examinations have already been held in some subjects. Careers advice is built into the curriculum, but this is primarily the responsibility of the class teacher. Post-secondary courses, organized by academic secondary schools, higher education institutions and other authorized groups, are becoming more popular among senior secondary school pupils. Vocational education in the context of adult education has also become widespread among pupils who do not succeed in continuing their studies or who enter the labour market. Whether pupils continue their education is a matter of personal choice. Some 74% of those completing secondary school wished to continue in higher education and half of them were admitted.

5.1.3. Teachers

Teachers are specialized in particular subjects and their teaching within the school is organized by subject. Secondary school teachers are trained at universities (five years). They are state employees. A system of in-service training, as in the case of primary school teachers, is under preparation at present.

5.1.4. Statistics

During the 1993/94 school year, 93.3% of 15-year-olds, 87.4% of 16-year-olds and 62.4% of 17-year-olds benefited from the Hungarian public education system. Some 96% of 16-year-olds completed elementary education in that year. In 1995, 70 265 people, 40.4% of whom were aged 18, sat upper secondary school leaving examinations (including those in secondary vocational schools).

1995/96

Academic secondary	469
Secondary school students	140 884
Secondary school teachers	12 912
Students per teacher	10.9
Classrooms	5 203
Classes	4 662
Students per class	30.21
Teachers per class	2.76

5.2. Secondary vocational schools (*szakközépiskola*)

The aims of secondary vocational school education have been debated for decades. There appear to be three main aims:

- education for intermediate-level skilled workers and technicians;
- education for skilled workers who have become eligible for higher education by passing both their vocational and their upper secondary school leaving certificates;
- education on a large scale for a less specialized, more flexible labour force.

After several attempts to reform the system, each of which concentrated on only one of these aims, the present vocational education structure was set up in the 1980s within which all three goals were given recognition and statutory form.

A campaign began in the late 1950s and early 1960s to establish vocational education leading to an upper secondary school leaving certificate. The initial reform process was stopped in 1965. The main function of vocational education was less specialized education, and technician training became a part of secondary adult education. Vocational schools leading to a certificate were not recognized and the 1972 Act on Vocational Training placed vocational education in the context of short-term training which at the same time became a part of the formal system. In the aftermath of the political decisions taken in 1972, emphasis in educational policy was placed on egalitarian ideas and short-term specialization. The certificate was however once again recognized. In the mid-1980s, technician education was brought back into the formal school system. Some of the secondary vocational schools extended to a fifth and final year, which led to a specialist vocational certificate. At present, the secondary vocational school provides general education and vocational education and prepares for entry to higher education. The three types of secondary vocational school are described elsewhere in this chapter.

The 1996 Amendment of the Public Education Act defines secondary vocational school as a four-year school providing basic education following which there is a specialized year of vocational education. During this year, the school prepares pupils for examinations in the occupations listed in the National List of Qualifications.

The age group for this education is 14- to 18/19-year-olds. Of all primary school pupils, 33.7% continue their education in this type of school. The drop-out rate, 15 to 18%, is fairly high but still not as high as the prevailing average for secondary vocational education. An entrance examination has been introduced, mostly for schools which are generally over-subscribed such as secondary vocational schools teaching economics and commerce. Education in secondary vocational schools is free of charge. Extra-curricular activities and study groups outside

the obligatory curriculum must be paid for. More and more pupils qualifying from these schools – recently 36% – are applying for admission to higher education and, in general, 45% of applicants are successful.

Although secondary vocational schools are coeducational, technical schools are more popular with boys than with girls, while for schools which prepare pupils for a trade or service industry the reverse is true. Secondary vocational schools and vocational education schools usually share the same facilities, the main reason for this being that vocational education schools recently started secondary vocational school classes in order to maintain pupil numbers.

The schools are normally day schools, with one or two days' training in apprentice workshops.

There are also evening courses for adults. Classes are organized by occupation and age.

5.2.1. Curriculum

In the first two years of secondary vocational school 18 to 20 hours, and in the second two years 12 to 14 hours, are devoted to general subjects out of a weekly total of 30 to 32 hours. The actual curricular structure is defined by the type of school. In schools for the education of technicians, there are no vocational subjects in the first two years which leaves more time for general subjects, in particular foreign languages. In the final year, the fifth year, however, the whole week is devoted to vocational subjects apart from two to three hours. In schools which train skilled workers, workshop training takes up two days per week in the final two years, while in the remaining two kinds of vocational school one day a week is devoted to workshop activities.

In many schools, career guidance has been introduced on an experimental basis after the second year. Pupils who are low achievers are steered towards vocational training, while others remain in the same branch of education. Educational institutions are increasingly introducing pre-school classes (OECD's ISCED level 0) in foreign languages and some subjects are being taught in foreign languages as in the bilingual schools.

A state programme for the development of "World Bank Schools" has been very important for vocational education over the last few years. This programme already includes 200 schools. The first two years of basic general education are followed by a second two-year period of basic vocational education in these schools. In the first two years, the proportion of general subjects is 85% and the proportion of basic vocational subjects 15%. In the following period, the number of hours devoted to basic vocational subjects does not exceed 40% of the total timetable and the emphasis remains on general subjects. The curriculum and timetable are designed by a team of teachers from the school. Specialization follows after these four years of education.

The new regulation of the curriculum will be a great challenge for vocational schools in the coming years. This will mean that in the first two years there will be only general education and in the third and fourth years only career guidance, with vocational education beginning after these two periods. Therefore, the vocational schools' curricula must be thoroughly revised. The 1996 Amendment limits the number of hours devoted to theoretical subjects to seven per day.

The freedom of choice of methods and books is similar to that in the academic secondary schools.

Vocational schools have close economic links with local industries. Some 1.5% of companies' wage costs has to be spent on vocational education. Companies transfer this amount either to the Vocational Educational Fund or, in many cases, directly to the school. Companies prefer direct transfers, since this enables close contact to be made with the school and feedback is easier.

5.2.2. Assessment

Assessment, marking and the final school leaving examinations are similar to those in the academic secondary schools. In secondary vocational schools, however, pupils may take vocational examinations in parallel with the final school leaving examinations. Vocational examinations consist of written and oral examinations as well as practical examinations. Examination requirements are set by the Minister responsible for the specific area and all are state examinations. The examining board is an independent body and consists of a chairman delegated by the Minister, a representative of the employer and of the local Chamber of Commerce (the latter two mainly evaluate practical skills), and finally, a representative of the school. Pupils who pass the examination receive a vocational certificate, which is nationally recognized and entitles them to work as skilled workers or technicians.

There is no contact between vocational schools and higher education institutions. Careers advice is given only in the human resource centres.

5.2.3. Teachers

Vocational, theoretical and practical teaching can be carried out only by qualified graduates and experts as specified in the Education Act. When choosing teachers for practical teaching, preference is given to those with a vocational certificate. According to the 1996 Amendment, teachers of practical subjects in secondary vocational schools have to have college or university degrees in the appropriate field.

5.2.4. Statistics 1995/96

Secondary vocational schools	646
Students	208 415
Teachers	15 772
Students per teacher	13.2
Classrooms	6 351
Classes	7 292
Students per class	28.5
Teachers per class	2.16

6. Initial training

In Hungary, short-term vocational training is well-developed and has its origins in the German-type dual model. In the 1950s, the former system of apprenticeship was subordinated to the large-scale demands for labour created by the forced industrialization under the planned economy. This branch of education was weakened and jeopardized by the policy of introducing polytechnics in the early 1960s, which aimed to provide all skilled workers with secondary education leading to an upper secondary school leaving certificate. After 1965, the system of vocational education with its dual character was restored. This sector was supposed to absorb the large number of children born in the 1950s. In 1969, vocational schools were integrated into the formal school system, thus vocational pupils acquired the same legal status as their peers in other secondary schools. Since the second half of the 1980s, the number of applications made to vocational schools has gradually decreased.

According to the 1985 Education Act, there are four types of short-term vocational education:

- three-year vocational training school;
- three-year medical training school;
- two-year training school for typists;
- one- or two-year specialized vocational education.

In all respects, the most important type was the three-year vocational training school, which still takes a large proportion of pupils from the primary schools. Other types are less important. The numbers of applicants to medical and typing schools has been decreasing for years and is now estimated at only a few thousand. Due to the demographic boom, there has been an increase in applicants to the specialized vocational schools. There is, however, debate as to their role and importance.

6.1. Vocational training schools (*szakmunkásképző iskola*)

The vocational education school provides vocational and practical life skills. At present, pupils attending these schools are in the age group 14 to 17, but since new legislation provides for training to start at age 16, the

average age is expected to increase. In 1995, this type of school was attended by the largest tranche of primary school leavers, with 34.2%. The drop-out rate is very high, at 20 to 25%, and in some areas it is even higher. There is no entrance examination but applicants must undergo a medical examination to ensure that they are fit to attend. Vocational education, if it is not post-secondary training, is free of charge. This was further confirmed by the 1996 Amendment.

During the three-year course, half of the time is spent in practical education in workshops maintained either by the school or by state-run companies. Special contracts are needed if training is given in private companies. Since the 1980s, training workshops have been closed down which has led to crises in the vocational education sector. In 1990, two thirds of students were trained in factory workshops, but four years later this proportion had dropped to one third and by 1993 more pupils were trained in school workshops than in factories. School workshops are funded by local authorities or by the Vocational Education Fund which offers interest-free loans. Entrepreneurs are becoming increasingly involved in vocational education, and by 1994 most students were being trained in this way.

Curricula for vocational education schools are varied, depending on the subject. The preparation of curricula is usually the task of the National Institute for Vocational Training. The choice of methods and books is narrower in this branch of education than in general education schools.

The new law on vocational education significantly changes its structure and content. It is expected that the time spent in education will vary according to the occupation involved, as opposed to the present uniform duration. Employers will have increasing influence on the organization of practical training and vocational schools will have to be prepared for an influx of adult applicants.

In the case of vocational training schools, funding arrangements are similar to those of vocational secondary schools, i.e. companies prefer to make direct transfers to schools rather than to pay into the Vocational Education Fund. On the other hand, companies are active partners in practical training, in the form of either workshop or on-the-job training. Companies can deduct the cost of training from the amount they would otherwise have to transfer to the Fund.

The system of assessment and marking is similar to that used in other secondary schools. The monitoring of practical training is, however, facilitated by the daily work diary kept by pupils. Examinations and assignments are similar to those in vocational secondary schools. In this type of school, the teachers are state employees and have to be higher education graduates. The same is true for teachers of practical subjects who must have at least five years' practical experience in the field. Teachers of practical subjects can also be employed by companies.

Statistics 1995/96

Vocational education schools	349
Vocational students	154 300
Teachers	5 899
Practical teachers	4 385
Students per teacher	26.2
Students per practical teacher	35.2
Classrooms	3 852
Classes	5 490
Students per class	28.1
Teachers per class	1.07
Capacity of school workshops	36 962
Students per 100 training places	158

6.2. Special vocational training schools (*speciális szakiskola*)

Prior to 1985, one- and two-year vocational schools provided education for children requiring special treatment and who had completed the eight-year primary school for the handicapped. The 1985 Act opened up this type of school to able-bodied children also and its educational functions were extended under the 1990 Act, under which special vocational training schools prepare pupils for work and family life and offer training for the more accessible occupations. In recent years, this type of school has increasingly gained ground and has become an important element in the school system.

Classes in this school provide continuity of education after primary school (years 9 and 10) but education is also provided in other (sometimes non-educational) institutions.

In 1991, a new curriculum was published for special vocational training schools. This comprises three sets of subjects:

- general practical subjects (usually 12 hours per week);
- vocational subjects (18 hours per week);
- development of social skills (2 hours per week).

By the end of 1991, 15 occupational programmes were available, each consisting of two parts: a three-month job-orientation programme and a two-month specialized programme.

This type of school plays a significant role in the transition from basic education to vocational education and helps children aged 15 to 16 to prepare for work.

Statistics 1995/96

Special vocational training schools	239
Students	13 984
Teachers	796
Students per teacher	17.56

7. Higher education

The Hungarian higher education system consists of universities and colleges. (The latter are organized on the lines of the German *Fachhochschulen*.) This binary system has developed in response to a demand for training that met practical needs in contrast to the longer and more theoretical courses at the universities. Consequently, universities generally provide a high standard of theoretical knowledge, while colleges offer courses which are more practical and shorter. Early in the 1990s, a number of church-run higher education institutions were established and they are increasingly offering subjects other than theological studies (e.g. teacher training). All Hungarian higher education institutions are established or closed down by Parliament, in the light of the opinion of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee.

Foreign higher education institutions may also operate in Hungary and may issue foreign degrees providing that these are recognized by the state in their home country and/or are accredited and the degrees issued by them are also officially recognized. The approval of the Minister for Culture and Education is also required for the operation of such institutions.

Part of the university and college structure is specialized: early in the 1950s, the former classical European university structure was broken up into undergraduate schools for groups of professions (medical, agricultural, economics and technical universities) as a result of which colleges were also organized around such specializations. Universities may offer both university and college-level education.

Hungarian higher education institutions are autonomous under the Higher Education Act. Since 1 September 1993, all higher education institutions (with the exception of police and military institutions), have been under the statutory supervision of the Minister for Culture and Education. The majority of higher education institutions in Hungary are state-run. However, the number of church-run institutions (mainly in the field of theology) and private institutions recognized by the state is also considerable. At present there are 89 higher institutions, of which 30 are universities (25 state and 5 church-maintained universities) and 59 are colleges (32 state, 23 church-run colleges and 4 run by foundations).

Since 1 September 1996, a new form of higher education has been introduced by the Amendment to the 1993 Higher Education Act. This new form is higher vocational education which is integrated into the system of higher education and as such it is also accredited: an example of this is the training modules for horticulturists specialising in European agricultural policies.

Beyond both university and college undergraduate education, specialized degrees may be obtained. Following university education, students may also study for PhDs.

7.1. Entrance requirements

According to the Higher Education Act, the requirement for admission to university or college undergraduate education is the Hungarian upper secondary school leaving certificate – a secondary school leaving certificate or an equivalent recognized certificate confirming that the student has completed secondary school education – or a higher education degree. In earlier years, entrance examinations were general, but an increasing percentage of students is admitted to higher education institutions solely on the basis of their secondary school results. Nevertheless, there are certain higher education programmes to which admission is on a selective basis. The higher education institutions may also make admission subject to additional criteria. If this is the case, the higher education institution must publish the admission criteria before introducing them (e.g. the need for an examination certificate in foreign languages, previous specialized education or qualifications, the results of the upper secondary school leaving examination).

A government decree determines the general and mandatory rules governing the admissions procedure (e.g. the date of application, the rules of transparency and legal redress, the organizational and procedural rules of evaluation). The higher education institutions themselves determine the number of students to be admitted. They always take into account the financial commitment of the state: the state's decision on funding reflects the recommendations of the Council of Higher Education and Science. The National Admissions Office, functioning under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Education, supports the admissions activities of the higher education institutions.

The condition of access to postgraduate education is a university or college degree or a diploma obtained in a higher education institution as specified by the higher education institution in question. In the case of doctoral studies, a university degree or equivalent is required. The higher education institution may also make admission subject to additional criteria (e.g. employment, a specific job, a particular period of professional experience). These criteria must be published at least two years before they are introduced.

7.2. Tuition fees

Students participating in higher education financed by the state pay tuition fees and other fees, while students participating in higher education not financed by the state pay tuition and all related expenses (books, stationery, accommodation etc.). Nevertheless, under certain conditions, higher education institutions may exempt some students from tuition fees.

Rules concerning tuition fees and other expenses are set out in the regulations of the higher education institutions. In the case of both state higher education institutions and non-state higher education institutions financed by the state, regulations on tuition fees are made within the framework of a government decree.

7.3. Academic Year

In Hungarian higher education institutions, the academic year consists of two semesters. The autumn semester, which lasts fifteen weeks, generally starts at the beginning of September and ends before the Christmas holidays. The examination period in the autumn semester runs from the second half of December until the end

of January. The spring semester begins in the first week of February and ends in mid-May, and the examination period for the spring semester lasts until the end of June. In both semesters, universities and colleges are allowed a one-week break, while the summer period (July and August) – with only a few exceptions – is a vacation period everywhere.

7.4. Types and length of courses

The period of study needed to gain the first level of qualification at both university and college is described as undergraduate education which may be followed by postgraduate education in some special field at university and at college. University postgraduate education also includes doctoral studies.

Accordingly, there are university and college undergraduate courses. The period of study for college undergraduate education is three or four years, and further specialized education can take a minimum of one year. The minimum period of study for university undergraduate education is four years, although it usually lasts five years and, in exceptional cases, six years. One year is the minimum period of study for specialized postgraduate education, although generally this stage lasts for two years and in exceptional cases three years. The duration of PhD programmes is usually three years.

In Hungary, higher education institutions are specialized. There are liberal arts and sciences, medical, agricultural, economics, and technical colleges and universities. These higher education institutions offer courses in line with their specializations.

7.5. Assessment

In university and college undergraduate education and postgraduate education, the detailed study requirements and the details of training principles are regulated by the curricula, while knowledge to be acquired in the subject is determined by the course programmes. These are approved by the principal body of the institution, its council, within the scope of its authority.

The institution-level curricula, course programmes, and, where appropriate, practical requirements, are prepared taking into account both the qualification requirements of the individual departments, as adopted by the government under the provisions of the Higher Education Act, and international rules and standards.

Universities and colleges define their practical requirements (attending classes, seminars, summer practical courses, etc.) in their curricula. This variety leads to a unified system and this is guaranteed by the grading system. According to the Higher Education Act, the grading system in Hungary may be either one in which the highest mark is 5 (excellent), while the lowest is 1 (fail), or one expressed in terms of pass with credit, pass, and fail. Universities and colleges have also now begun making more frequent use of the credit system primarily based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

7.6. Qualifications

The general requirements for degrees are approved by the Hungarian government and the detailed rules are established by the universities and colleges responsible. This solution has made it possible for degrees to be harmonized in Hungary, regardless of whether they are issued by a state or a non-state higher education institution. Degrees have a dual character in Hungary, combining both an academic and a vocational qualification.

Hungarian universities and colleges award degrees on a binary basis. The Hungarian name for the college degree is "*főiskolai diploma*", and that for the university degree "*egyetemi diploma*". In order to facilitate international comparisons, the Higher Education Act makes it possible for graduate students of Hungarian higher education institutions to use the English term "Bachelor" if they have completed a college education and "Master" if they have completed university education, with an indication of their area of study. Graduates of higher vocational education receive higher vocational qualifications.

The conditions for obtaining the final qualification in university undergraduate education are completion of the required courses and examinations and a written final dissertation related to the student's specialization. At the end of their final year, students must successfully complete the final examination.

The new Hungarian doctorate (in the case of arts universities, the Doctor of Liberal Arts degree) corresponds in every respect to what is known and recognized internationally as a PhD. The post-college and post-university specialized degrees are relatively new, but they are similar to the degrees which may be obtained in many other countries.

7.7. Teachers

According to the Hungarian Higher Education Act, only persons with a university degree may be teachers or lecturers in higher education institutions. Consequently, the higher education teaching qualification may only be obtained in university undergraduate education after four or five years of study. Teachers are subject specialists. The courses generally concentrate on one major area of study in accordance with the teacher's specialization.

7.8. Statistics 1993/94

Number of teachers	21 761
Number of students	144 428
Number of institutions	91

Source: OECD Indicators 1995.

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POLAND

25	UNIVERSITY		PROFESSIONAL		LICENTIATE	
24	MASTER'S DEGREE		DEGREES		DEGREES	
23	5-6 YEARS		3-4 YEARS		2-3 YEARS	
22						
21						
20	POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS		HIGHER EDUCATION			
19						
18	GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOL (LICEUM OGÓLNOKSZTAŁCĄCE)		SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS & PROFESSIONAL LYCEUMS (TECHNIKUM I LICEUM ZAWODOWE)		VOCATIONAL (BASIC) SCHOOLS (SZKOŁA ZASADNICZA)	
17						
16						
15			SECONDARY EDUCATION			
14						
13						
12						
11	2nd stage					
10	PRIMARY EDUCATION (SZKOŁA PODSTAWOWA)					
9						
8	1st stage					
7						
6					PRE-SCHOOL YEARS	
5	PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION (PRZEDSZKOLE)					
4						
3						

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

Poland is situated in the centre of Europe and covers 312 520 square kilometres. In the year 1995, Poland had a population of approximately 38.6 million, 62% of whom lived in 860 towns and urban areas and 38% in rural ones (in about 43 000). The country is divided into 49 voivodships (provinces) and 2 468 local self-government communes.

There is only a small annual increase in population, which is connected with the decreasing birth-rate. In 1995 this rate equalled 1.2%.

In accordance with the Constitution, Poland is a Parliamentary Republic headed by the President of the Republic elected by direct popular vote for five years. The bicameral Parliament consists of the 460 members of the *Sejm* (lower chamber) and of the 100 members of the Senate. Members of the *Sejm* and the Senate are elected by General Election for a four-year term. The restoration of parliamentary democracy after 1989 has led to the emergence of many independent political parties. Post-“Solidarity” parties lost the latest elections in 1993 and now a leftist-peasant coalition (Democratic Left Alliance “SLD” and Polish Peasants’ Party “PSL”) is in power.

The overwhelming majority of the population are native Poles. Poland is predominantly Roman Catholic (about 35 million baptized). Other religions and denominations are represented by a large number of relatively small communities (among them the greatest are: Orthodox – 540 000, Eastern Orthodox – 110 000, Evangelical-Augsburg – 85 000).

Since 1992, the Polish GDP has started to increase – in 1994 it amounted to 5%, in 1995 to 6.5% and in 1996 it amounted to 6.0%. Although the last two cabinets have lowered the pace of privatization, 58% of the GDP is generated by the private sector with 62% of the total manpower employed there (1995). The employment sectors are distributed for 1995 as follows: services 43%, industry and construction 30%, agriculture 27%. In September 1996 the rate of unemployment was 13.5%. In 1994 it amounted to 16%.

1.2. Basic principles: education

The present constitutional and legal foundations for education were strongly influenced by the “Solidarity” period (1980-81) and by the “round-table” negotiations (communists versus opposition) in spring 1989. They were finally given shape in the Polish Education Act of 1991 and amendments of 1995. The Act defines education as part of “the common welfare of the whole of society”. It states that education should be guided by the principles contained in the Constitution and by instructions contained in universal, international legislation and conventions.

The basic principles of the education system are included in the first chapter of the Act on the Education System. In particular this system should provide, among other things: a realization of the right of each citizen in the Republic of Poland to learn and the right of children and young people to be educated and cared for; support provided by schools to back up the educational role of the family; the possibility for various entities to establish and run schools and institutions; the adjustment of the contents, methods and organization of education to pupils’ psycho-physical abilities; and the possibility to avail oneself of psychological care and of special forms of didactic work; the possibility for disabled and maladjusted children and young people to learn at all types of schools and general access to secondary schools.

In the implementation of the core curricula the following principles were taken into account:

- the core curriculum contains topics that must be regarded as compulsory, but the teacher may decide on the degree of detail with which each particular topic is treated;
- the order in which topics are taught and the amount of time devoted to each is a matter for the teacher to decide, according to his interpretation of the curriculum;
- non-compulsory or optional topics are only suggestions. The teacher has the right to reject them totally, to choose which ones he/she introduces, or to introduce new topics;
- the teacher has the right to choose the forms and methods of teaching and to choose the textbooks based on the requirements of a particular class, the school's equipment, the organizational framework within which he/she operates and his/her own inclinations.

The following laws, with subsequent amendments, also have an impact on decisions taken in the field of education: the Teachers' Charter Act of 26 January 1982 amended in 1996; the Territorial Self-Government Act of 8 March 1990; the Act of 24 November 1995 on the change of the scope of activities of some towns, and the annual Budget Act.

Legal regulations concerning secondary schools are included in the following laws: the Act on Secondary Schools of 12 September 1990 and the Act on Scientific Titles and Scientific Degrees. A bill on technical colleges was passed by the Parliament at the beginning of 1996.

1.3. Division of responsibility and provision

Overall responsibility for education in Poland has always rested with the Ministry of Education. In the past it was only vocational and professional education that was partly supervised and maintained by other ministries (together with the Ministry of Education). Because of the specific nature of some vocations, there were schools which were supervised and maintained entirely by Ministries other than the Ministry of Education. A certain minority of educational institutions supervised by other Ministries will continue to exist (schools and institutions supervised by the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture).

However, because of the difficult economic situation, many Ministries and enterprises have withdrawn from the maintenance of their schools.

In recent years, there has been more of a move towards increased, if not complete, supervision of vocational schools by the Ministry of Education. The reasons for this were not only economic difficulties, but also the strong conviction of some policy makers that this was the right direction. This conviction is shared by representatives of the present opposition within the Parliament, especially the Freedom Union.

The main role in initiating and exercising control over current and long-term educational policy is played by the Minister for Education.

The involvement of the *Sejm* and its Education Committee in educational matters is rather passive. Through its members in the Education Committee, the *Sejm* may present its proposals and initiatives, although, in the majority of cases, the Committee works on materials that have originally been prepared by the Ministry of Education. The Parliament is responsible for the final version of legal Acts that determine the orientation of educational policy and the amount of money earmarked for education.

Teachers' Unions have a considerable role in shaping current educational policy. The Minister for Education is obliged to consult Teachers' Unions on the most important decisions, and in certain cases he must have their approval.

The participation of social partners (individuals, institutions and organizations) in school work does not occur on a large scale. There are no parents' or pupils' organizations at a level higher than the school. However, the legislative framework concedes significant rights to parents and pupils as members of the school councils – they have the same rights as teachers – and all these three groups have equal representations (one-third each) on the school councils. In the majority of schools, however, parents are neither able nor willing to co-operate with the school. Although several years have passed since the first school councils were established, and legislators expressed their intention to have voivodship school councils and one national school council established, until now no school council has been registered at voivodship level.

In several towns, at the initiative of teachers and educators, social councils for education have been established. One example is the Warsaw Social Council.

A slow but systematic increase in the importance of the "spokesperson for pupils' rights" may be observed. This position was first established a few years ago, and at first it functioned only in some secondary schools in Warsaw. At present this "institution" is functioning in several voivodships.

Although the Ministry of Education and its superintendent's offices are responsible for educational supervision and staff policy, the running of the schools (organization and management) is increasingly the responsibility of the communes. From 1 January 1996 all primary schools became the responsibility of local self-governing boards (communes). Pre-school establishments had become the communes' responsibility three years earlier.

1.4. Administration

In the school year 1991/92, educational administration was separated from general administration, and thereby achieved autonomy. At the same time, school inspectorates were abolished. These had previously constituted an intermediate level of local educational administration.

At present there are three levels of administration in the Polish education system:

- at central level: the Minister for National Education (in co-operation with other ministers running vocational schools who exercise supervision over these schools, but only in vocational subjects);
- at regional level: the educational supervisor (*kurator*), who carries out state educational policy at the voivodship level;
- at school level: the headteacher.

The Minister of National Education determines the following groups of problems and tasks:

- curricula and core curricula of compulsory subjects;
- teaching programmes and textbooks;
- rules for assessing and promoting pupils, for conducting examinations, organization of the school year; study courses and national competitions;
- procedures for organising care of handicapped pupils and for providing psychological and pedagogical assistance to pupils.

The educational supervisor is directly subordinate to the Minister of National Education (not to the *voivode*) and is a body within the special government administration. The educational supervisor is appointed by the Minister, who takes into account the opinion of the *voivode*. The candidate should be selected through open competition. The *kurator* is responsible for the appointment of headteachers to schools in his area, following an open competition. He also has certain powers in the administration of non-public schools.

The *kurator* is also responsible for running the schools and educational institutions under him, for deciding on the location of new primary schools and drawing the district boundaries of these schools, organising in-service training for public school teachers and exercising educational supervision over schools and educational institutions within his voivodship.

The headteacher decides on the following matters: employment and dismissal of teachers and non-teaching staff; commendations or reprimands for teachers and non-teaching staff; proposals concerning rewards for teachers and non-teaching staff in schools. Moreover, in 1991 school headteachers were given considerable autonomy for both teaching and financial activities.

A sign of the democratization of education was the decision to permit the use of many teaching programmes and thus of many textbooks, in the teaching of one subject. This decision was motivated primarily by the wish to allow a choice of textbook (now the teacher makes this decision, not the education authorities) and to encourage the writing of ever better textbooks for pupils and teachers. Sometimes this decision leads to a fight for the market, to a run on some textbooks, and to disputes over money.

The offer of teaching programmes contained in the set of curricula authorized for use in schools by the Ministry of National Education is supplemented in practice by so-called "author programmes" (those prepared by a teacher or a group of teachers), whose implementation is defined as an innovative school activity. All

things connected with the curricula (teaching programmes, core curricula, timetables) are published as legal texts and as ministerial decrees.

1.5. Non-public schools

In line with the Education Act of 1991, schools can be of two types: public (state) schools, which offer free education within the framework of the core curricula, and non-public schools. The latter can be civic (social), church or private schools. The schools were called "social" or "civic" because of the huge amount of work that was invested in them by people from local social groups – mostly parents and teachers.

All these schools may have their own curricula, which are approved by the Minister of Education. They are financed by fees received from parents. Funds can also come from private enterprises and foundations. Since February 1990, non-public schools have been eligible for a grant calculated according to the number of pupils, of up to 50% of the average cost of educating a pupil in a state school.

Private schools have also been opened (in the 1995/96 school year there were 292 of them), functioning as profit-making enterprises. Unlike the "civic" or church schools, these private schools are clearly intended for children from better-off families.

Non-public schools in Poland have the right to issue school certificates that are recognized by all other schools and by the universities.

Most non-public schools have small numbers of pupils and small classes. They may be distinguished from the public schools by their personalized instruction programmes, by a wider range of curriculum choice and by a higher standard of foreign language teaching.

In the 1995/96 school year, there were 312 non-public primary schools (103 private, 22 church and 187 civic), 304 non-public general secondary schools (107 private, 46 church and 151 civic), and 184 non-public vocational secondary and basic vocational schools – 800 non-public schools altogether.

Non-public primary school pupils make up 0.5% of the total number of pupils attending primary schools, non-public general secondary school pupils about 4.5% and non-public vocational secondary and basic vocational school pupils 1.2%.

1.6. Financing

The overwhelming majority of public funds for education come from the state budget. However, the structure of public expenditure in the field of education has changed. The communes have greatly increased their participation in the financing of education. In the eighties more than 90% of the state budget was spent on education. In the 1994/95 school year, direct financing from the state budget dropped to 67%, and in 1996 this rate is expected to be still lower since all primary schools in Poland will be taken over by the communes, i.e. local self-government boards. (In 1995, under 40% of them were under the responsibility of the communes.)

It should be stressed that most of the spending on education goes on salaries (84% in 1992) and only a small amount on running costs (in some state schools, running costs are partially covered by parents). This means that other needs (equipment, instructional aids, etc.) can be supplied only to a very small degree.

Right up until mid-1991, the salary of a secondary school teacher amounted to 110% of the average salary in Poland (in the state sector). Now it is estimated that a teacher employed in the public sector earns around 70% of the national average for industry.

In spite of the constitutional right of children to free education, part of the burden of financing falls on the parents. The Ministry of Education estimated in 1992 that this drain on family budgets amounted on average to 17% of total educational expenditure. For the school year 1994/95 it was estimated that the parents' burden was even greater and amounted between 25 and 30% of total educational expenditure. This increase in pressure on family budgets results from the rapid increase in the price of textbooks, which are not free, teaching equipment, extra-curricular activities and private lessons. (In some schools requirements are very high, but statutory duties are not sufficiently met – e.g. foreign language teaching – which is not always the fault of teachers or headteachers.) Finally, the burden of financing children's education was also increased by the development of non-public schools, sometimes charging very high fees.

The financing of vocational colleges is a different problem. There is no intention to exempt other Ministries from this duty, although the burden of financing is gradually being taken over by enterprises of which there is a limited number.

Financial matters are usually the source of conflicts between the vocational colleges which still exist and which belong to other Ministries, and the Ministry of Education. The participation of other Ministries in the financing of education has considerably decreased.

A considerable, relative increase in expenditure on vocational and professional education has been noted, which is due to the fact that many schools of this type stopped being financed by other Ministries and started to be financed from *kuratoria* (superintendents' offices), i.e. from the state budget.

Non-public schools can receive grants from the state budget of up to 50% of the average amount spent on a pupil in a state school.

In practice, receipt of this grant, as well as its amount, depends on the financial conditions of the respective local commune or provincial board (*kuratorium*). This grant, however, covers much less than 50% of total costs of non-public schools.

1.7. Inspection, supervision and guidance

School inspection and supervision in Poland are not carried out by separate institutions. Pedagogical supervision, staff inspection and financial supervision are all placed in the education superintendents' offices. The Ministry of National Education also exercises control over superintendents' offices and schools.

Pedagogical supervision in the school is carried out by superintendents, while general supervision (organizational, administrative and financial) is carried out by bodies which run the school (more and more often commune boards).

Upon the implementation of the 1991 Act, the Ministry of Education declared that "...supervisory and disciplinary aspects of pedagogical supervision have been rejected in favour of the evaluation (diagnosis) of educational achievements...". The study of educational achievements and the assessment of school performance are still in their initial stages. Most progress has been made on national standards in the *matura* (secondary school leaving examination) and its evaluation.

The majority of staff employed in superintendents' offices, as well as supervisors, advisors and teaching methods specialists, are recruited from among teachers.

External support for schools and teachers is mainly provided by the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre, by regional centres and by educational advisors.

At the end of the 1980s, there were 545 centres for guidance and counselling in existence; at present this number is smaller. They are intended for pupils (mostly primary school pupils) rather than teachers. Some large schools employ school pedagogues or psychologists who contribute to the solving of individual or internal school problems.

2. Pre-school education

2.1. Background and organization

Pre-school education in Poland underwent certain changes caused by a decrease in the number of pre-school children and by the partial introduction of fees into this type of educational institution. Pre-school institutions are of two kinds: proper nursery schools and pre-school classes attached to primary schools. In 1989-94 the number of children aged 3 to 6 decreased by 17.5%, the number of pre-school institutions (both pre-schools and pre-school classes) decreased by 20.2%, while the number of children attending them decreased by 25%. In 1995 the attendance rate was calculated as 46.2% of children aged 3 to 6.

According to the Education Act of 1971, pre-school education is treated as the first level of the education system in Poland.

Coeducational pre-school education is generally accessible to children aged 3 to 6 in nursery schools or pre-school classes of primary schools. Nursery schools follow programmes which include the core curriculum of pre-school education as defined by the Minister for National Education (see also Chapter 1.2. on basic principles of education). Children aged 6 have the right to one year of pre-school education (the "zero year") and the communes are obliged to provide this.

The most important part of pre-school education is the child's development, in the process of which the needs and possibilities of each child ought to be taken into account.

Education for a child of six consists of stimulating its general development and teaching primary reading skills and basic mathematics. The commune is obliged to honour the right of six-year-olds to a one-year course.

Starting from September 1990, a nursery school is obliged to provide unpaid teaching and nursing for at least five hours a day – the time necessary for the implementation of the contents included in the Core Curriculum of Pre-School Education. The majority of pre-school institutions work for five to eleven hours a day. One teacher working in shifts cares for an average of 23 children at nursery schools and 16 children in pre-school classes. The situation is more favourable in rural districts, where one teacher cares for only 21 children in nursery schools and 14 in pre-school classes. In towns, however, the average is more than 23 and 16 children respectively.

A number of nursery schools have been closed, partly for demographic, partly for economic reasons (including unemployment). Nursery schools attached to enterprises have mostly been closed. These changes caused a considerable reduction in pre-school staff in some areas. Apart from this, other important changes have taken place recently. They are: the decrease in the number of pre-school classes attached to primary schools and the removal in 1994/95 of the compulsory "zero year" for six-year-olds.

2.2. Financing

Public nursery schools are administered and financed by a local self-government scheme – the communes. The financing scheme is regulated by the Act on the Education System (Article 79). Nursery schools are financed from:

- the general grants received by the commune from the state budget and set out in accordance with objective criteria defined in a separate Act;
- the communes' own revenues from various sources;
- parents' payments for children's meals, extra lessons, and a so-called extra fee if a child attends the nursery school for more than five hours a day. The fee is set by the commune upon consultation with the nursery school. Rich communes do not require such fees from parents. Parents pay an average of 11 to 22% of the average monthly salary. Payments made by parents vary widely and depend on the revenues of the nursery school generated from its own economic activities, savings made on the purchase of food products, and the involvement of parents in institutional operations. Very often rich communes raise teachers' salaries by 20% and more above the centrally established upper limits. Teacher salary schedules are set centrally, while the communes pay the service costs;
- the communes' own economic activities, e.g. renting unused space for storage rooms and renting out classrooms after lessons to various organizations conducting recreational or cultural activities for the local community.

2.3. Teachers

The pre-school teachers have the same rights, duties and salaries as teachers in primary education in years 1 to 3 of primary school. The differences concern the teaching load which is 18 hours per week for primary school teachers, 25 hours for pre-school teachers of the younger age groups, and 21 hours for pre-school teachers of six-year-olds.

The system of pre-school teacher training is constantly changing. At present, the forms of training offered are: three-year post-secondary teacher training colleges, teacher higher education schools, and teacher education faculties at universities. The previously existing two-year post-secondary teacher training schools were

abolished in 1994. Graduates of those schools constitute the largest group among pre-school teachers (61%). Many graduates of those schools enter higher education institutions; however, the majority of them choose faculties other than education.

Out of the total number of teachers working in nursery schools, as few as 11.6% have completed only secondary education. Teachers with a Master's degree constitute 18.5% of pre-school teaching staff. A large group are teachers without professional qualifications, that is either not specialized in pre-school education (about 23%) or those with no teaching qualifications whatsoever (7%).

The pre-school teaching profession is mostly female, with women making up 99.3% of teachers at this level.

As of 1990, 16 new colleges were established for the training of pre-school and primary school teachers (years 1 to 3). Graduates of these colleges acquire the title of "licentiate". They may take a job or enter a teacher higher education school or a university faculty.

2.4. Statistics 1995/96

	Nursery schools	Classes attached to primary schools	Total
Pupils	773 223	211 312	984 535
Full-time teachers	55 608	12 861	68 469
Schools	9 350	11 268	20 618
Pupils/year	23	16	21
Pupils/teacher	14	16	14

3. Primary education/compulsory education

The Education Act of 1991 states that compulsory education (unchanged since 1961) starts when the child reaches 7 years of age and lasts until the end of primary school, that is for eight years, but no longer than the school year in which the pupil becomes 17. Secondary education is not compulsory.

3.1. General information

Attendance at primary school is compulsory from the age of 7 to 15 (over 99% of the population). Primary education is free of charge for all pupils.

The eight-year primary school is the basis of the Polish system of schooling. Curricula are the same in all primary schools, as leavers should have comparable knowledge and skills. The primary school does not provide any vocational qualifications. It only equips its leavers with the bases for continuing their education in various types of secondary school.

Primary education is divided into two stages: the first stage (years 1 to 3) offering basic learning and the second stage (years 4 to 8) at which systematic learning is provided.

From an organizational point of view, the main types of primary school are as follows: schools with all years (1 to 8) and schools with years 1 to 3 (first stage), the latter existing mostly in small villages. All primary schools are coeducational. In the school year 1995/96, the average size of a primary school in towns was 626 pupils and, in rural areas, 134 pupils.

Primary schools are independent institutions; they are very rarely attached to general secondary schools, but pre-school classes are often attached to them. Most schools do not have to work in shifts, but 23.4% of pupils in towns have to attend them in the second or third shift and 9% in rural schools.

Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift (they last longer if a school works in two or three shifts). Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5 minutes, but no longer than 20 minutes. The duration of the school day also depends on the size of the school building and on the number of classrooms and other rooms facilitating after-school activities. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday. If the number of years is at least twice the number of classrooms, then classes may be conducted for six days a week throughout the school year, or in the alternate system, five days one week and six days every second week.

The organization of the school year for primary and secondary schools is defined by the Ministry of National Education and regulated by a separate decree. The Ministry of National Education issues the calendar for the school year on an annual basis specifying the dates of the start and the end of the school year and school holidays. The school year is divided into two semesters: (1) from the day lessons start on the first working day in September, until the last Saturday preceding the winter holidays; (2) from the Monday occurring directly after the winter holidays until the last day of school lessons, the first Friday after 18 June. The winter holidays must, as a rule, come in the period between mid-January and the end of February and last two weeks. A detailed period of holidays is defined by an education superintendent in agreement with the respective *voivode* (chief authority in the respective voivodship or province).

3.2. Curriculum

Primary schools operate on the basis of a general educational plan that determines the minimum weekly number of lessons for particular subjects. The plan also includes the number of lessons left to the discretion of the class teacher or the head, optional classes which the school is obliged to offer, a minimum weekly amount of classes for correctional and compensation gymnastics and remedial lessons, including specialist sessions if and when these are required by pupils. Within the framework of classes after lesson hours, different activities can be pursued (circles of interest, additional learning of foreign languages, choirs, musical instrument groups, recreational and sports activities – see also Chapter 1.2. on basic principles of education).

The main components taught at the lower level of primary school (years 1 to 3) are: a block of 12 lessons per week including Polish language, social and natural environment and mathematics, a block of 4 lessons including crafts and technology, art and music, and 2 or 3 lessons in physical education. The curriculum allows for flexibility in the timetable at the lower level, while in years 4 to 8 this flexibility decreases. In years 1 to 3, the pupils have 18 or 19 lessons per week, while in years 4 to 8 there are 22 to 26. The same subjects are taught to all pupils, but schools implementing experimental curricula, or pedagogical innovations, or "author programmes" (that is programmes developed by teachers themselves), may have a modified educational plan adopted.

In the lower years, one teacher teaches all subjects (or blocks of subjects), while in the senior years ("systematic teaching") each subject has a different teacher and pupils change classroom for each subject. As a result, the transition from years 3 to 4 is difficult for some children, in spite of the fact that there are no examinations or tests.

Teachers have the right to choose forms and methods of teaching, as well as the textbooks. A sign of this freedom is the number of textbooks for some subjects; for example, in December 1996, there were 41 approved textbooks and 96 supplementary books for teaching Polish in years 1 to 3. In senior years the choice is narrower, but even there one finds several textbooks for each subject in the same year.

3.3. Assessment

There are no standardized national tools for the assessment and evaluation of school achievements. Pupils are assessed by subject by means of an oral or written test. This depends entirely on the teacher. Only final marks, per semester and at the end of the year, have to be approved by a pedagogical council in each school. The results of the assessments carried out during the year are taken into account in the end-of-year assessment. The assessment is divided into partial, periodical and annual assessments. The teacher has the following scale of marks at his disposal: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – fair, satisfactory, 2 – poor, 1 – bad,

unsatisfactory. Pupils also receive marks for their behaviour according to the scale: excellent, very good, good, improper, unacceptable.

Parents must be kept informed of their children's progress. Pupils have the right to take an examination if the periodical or annual mark given by the teacher is too low, either in their opinion or in that of their parents. They are promoted to a higher year if they have received "poor" (2) marks or above for all compulsory subjects at the end of the school year. At the end of each school year, pupils receive a certificate testifying that they have completed the year and they then progress to the next year.

There is no leaving examination at the end of primary school (only a certificate), nor at the end of year 3 (the transition from basic to systematic learning). Pupils who are unsuccessful must repeat a year. There are special measures to cater for those in need who are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

At primary school level, the class tutor provides educational and vocational guidance. Pupils choose their future school with the help of parents and teachers on the basis of their interests and educational achievements. They can also seek advice from the centre for guidance and counselling – this applies particularly to pupils who have learning difficulties – but in all cases they have a free choice.

3.4. Teachers

As a rule, teachers are trained to teach one subject. Teacher training consists of training in subject matter (biology, mathematics, etc.) and professional training (teaching methods, psychology, pedagogy). Teachers may receive their initial training in three-year teacher training colleges providing professional studies and awarding the title of licentiate. Graduates from professional studies may complement their education with two-year university study courses and obtain a Master's degree.

Almost 61% of all primary school teachers have completed higher education, 30% are graduates from the two-year teacher training colleges (phased out at the beginning of the 1990s), and 9% of teachers have only completed secondary education. Many primary school teachers who have completed higher education are graduates from 12 universities or 10 teacher higher education schools.

A teacher is given a contract or an appointment. The appointment is permanent if the teacher has worked for at least four years, has been positively appraised at least twice and has the qualifications required to hold a given post. The appointment is temporary if the teacher fails to meet the requirements of the permanent appointment. Appointment for a specified period of time (under contract) occurs when the teacher's period of employment is specified in strict terms.

Education regulations do not exactly specify how many days per year teachers must attend in-service training. The Teachers' Charter states only that teachers should complete at least two institutionalized refresher courses of in-service training during the whole of their professional careers.

3.5. Statistics 1995/96

Special education is excluded from the following statistics.

Schooling rates in primary education for the age group 7 to 14 were the following: gross: 99%, nett: 97.2%.

Number of pupils, teachers and schools	
Pupils	5 007 144
Full-time teachers	308 907
Schools	18 911
Pupils/year	22
Pupils/teacher	16

4. Secondary education

4.1. General information

For some time now, about 95 to 97% of primary school leavers have continued with their education. In Poland, secondary education which covers the age group 15 to 18 (19) is usually called "middle" or post-primary. After primary school, pupils have a choice between the following schools:

- 4-year general secondary schools (called *liceum*);
- 4- and 5-year vocational secondary schools (called *technikum*) and their equivalents, such as "technical *liceum*";
- 3-year basic vocational colleges.

General secondary and vocational secondary schools offer the chance to take the matriculation examination (*matura*) and then the term "full secondary school" is used.

Secondary schools are mostly coeducational. There are also a small number of single-sex schools within vocational and professional education. Those schools are free and non-compulsory.

Admission to general secondary and vocational secondary schools is based on entrance examinations, and to vocational colleges on open recruitment, except when the number of candidates exceeds the number of places, in which case primary school achievements are taken into account. Each candidate applying for admission to a full secondary school (with maturity certificate) is graded according to the number of points that he receives (marks obtained in the entrance examination and included in the primary school leaving certificate).

Every secondary school organizes and sets its own entrance examinations which include a written and an oral test in the Polish language and in mathematics. Sometimes, there is an oral examination in the subject chosen as a major in the secondary school in question. For example, candidates who apply for admission to general secondary school and who wish to specialise in biology and chemistry must take an examination in biology with elements of chemistry.

General secondary schools provide pupils with secondary general education, with the possibility of obtaining the final leaving certificate of general education.

Instruction in these schools lasts four years. Those who have passed the final examination called *matura* may apply to higher education institutions. Some general secondary school leavers (for the most part not applying to higher education institutions and those who have not taken the *matura* examination) may continue their education in post-secondary vocational colleges.

There are different learning profiles in general secondary schools: about 61% of students attend years with the basic profile, 13% with the mathematics profile, 9% with the humanities profile, 11% with the biology-chemistry profile. About 6% of pupils choose other profiles (pedagogical, classical, sports, etc.)

Vocational secondary schools comprise:

Secondary technical schools. Education here lasts for five years or – in a few cases – four years, depending on the speciality. Technical school leavers (and equivalent) receive a leaving certificate called the *matura*. The leaving certificate shows the student has received secondary education and possesses secondary vocational qualifications. Students are awarded the title of technician or another title listed in the Classification of Occupations and Vocational Education Specialities. The *matura* certificate also entitles its holder to apply to a higher education institution.

Secondary schools of vocational education (vocational *liceum*) train qualified workers and other people in possession of equivalent qualifications. They also provide general secondary education. These schools are an extension of primary schools. Tuition in these schools lasts four years. The purpose is to meet the demand for qualified workers, and they also provide young people with the opportunity of acquiring a secondary education. After finishing the secondary schools of vocational education, pupils may take the matriculation examination and receive a secondary school leaving certificate. This certifies that the pupil is a qualified worker or a worker with equivalent qualifications in a specific vocational area who has received general

secondary education. The *matura* certificate also entitles its holder to apply for admission to a higher education institution.

Basic vocational schools are not "full secondary schools". Tuition in those schools usually lasts three years. A certificate obtained on completion of this school attests to the completion of the training at the level of qualified worker or equivalent in the relevant occupation. This certificate also entitles its holder to apply for admission to a general secondary or vocational secondary school, the curriculum of which is an extension of the basic vocational school programme.

The most important changes that have taken place in the Polish system of secondary education recently are – apart from the foundation of non-public schools – those concerning the structure of secondary education. The percentage of general secondary school pupils increased from 22.3% in 1989/90 to 31% in 1995/96; during the same period of time the percentage of vocational secondary school pupils increased from 32.3% to 38%, and the percentage of basic vocational school pupils decreased from 45.4% to 31%.

The use of school buildings and the organization of school time are arranged according to the same rules established for primary schools.

4.2. Curriculum

As in the case of primary education, all documents connected with secondary education curricula (teaching programmes, core curricula, timetables) are published as legal texts and as ministerial decrees. Teachers are free to choose teaching materials and methods (see also Chapter 1.2. on basic principles of education).

The approved number of hours per subject in general secondary schools (basic profile) is the following:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
1. Polish language	4	4	4	4
2. 1st modern foreign language 3. 2nd modern foreign language or Latin	5	5	5	
4. Mathematics	3	3	2	2
5. Social studies/civics	–	–	–	1
6. History	1	1	1	1
7. Geography	+1	+1	+2	+2
8. Biology with Hygiene and Environmental Protection	1	1	1	–
9. Physics and Astronomy	1 + 2	1 + 2	1 + 2	–
10. Chemistry	2	1	–	–
11. Technology/Computer studies	1	–	–	–
12. Art/Music	+1	2*	–	–
13. Defence training	1	1	–	–
14. Physical education	2	2	2	2
Lessons for class tutor	1	1	0.5	0.5
Lessons for profile teaching (determined by school)	–	2	5	8
Total	28	28	26.5	23.5

* 2 lessons per week in year 2 have to be devoted either to subject 11 or to subject 12.

The number of hours per subject in vocational secondary schools is as follows:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1. Polish language	4	3	3	3	3
2. Modern foreign language	2	2	2	2	2
3. History	2	1	1	1	1
4. Introduction to computer science	2	1	-	-	-
5. Defence training	1	1	-	-	-
6. Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
7. Social studies (civics)	-	-	-	-	1
8. Geography	2	1	1	-	-
9. Mathematics	2	2	2	2	2
10. Physics	1	1	1	1	-
11. Chemistry	+2	+2	+1	+1	+1
12. Protection and Shaping of Environment or Biology with Hygiene and Environmental Protection	2	1	-	-	-
Lessons for class tutor	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
General subjects — total	24	18.5	13.5	12.5	12.5
Vocational subjects — total	6	11.5	16.5	17.5	17.5
Total	30	30	30	30	30

The number of hours per subject in basic vocational colleges is as follows:

Subject	Number of lessons per week		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Polish language	3	2	2
2. Modern foreign language	2	2	2
3. Mathematics	2	2	2
4. Defence training	1	1	-
5. Physical education	2	2	2
6. Social studies (civics)	-	1	-
7. History	2	-	-
8. Physics	1	1	-
9. Chemistry	2	-	-
10. Protection and Shaping of Environment	1	-	-
Lessons for class tutor	1	0.5	0.5
General subjects — total	17	11.5	8.5
Vocational subjects — total	11	16.5	19.5
Total	28	28	28

There are few possibilities of transfer between schools and most of these refer to transfers from general to vocational education. Thus, after the second year of the general secondary school pupils may enter a three-

year vocational college. General secondary school pupils may change profiles during and after the first year. Pupils from basic vocational colleges may, after the second or third year, continue their education in secondary vocational schools, which offer the opportunity to take the matriculation examination.

4.3. Assessment

This is similar to the system in primary schools. Contrary to this, the majority of secondary schools arrange final examinations, although they are not compulsory.

The secondary school final examination forms the basis for obtaining the "maturity certificate". Although it is not compulsory, more than 90% of final year students from both general and vocational (technical) secondary schools take this examination. Topics for the written examinations are defined by the 49 regional superintendents' offices (*kuratoria*). Topics for the oral examinations, however, are defined by schools and, therefore, it is difficult to compare the results at national level.

There are still lively discussions taking place on the transition from secondary to higher education and particularly on the links between performance in secondary schools and the admission to higher education. Admission to higher education is at present based on entrance examinations or free recruitment.

4.4. Teachers

Secondary school teachers ought to have completed a university education or equivalent. The highest qualifications are held by general secondary school teachers – 96% of those (full-time) teachers have completed higher education. In vocational schools, this percentage is lower, 86% in vocational secondary schools and 66% in basic vocational colleges.

Secondary school teachers are employed according to the same rules as apply in primary schools.

4.5. Statistics 1995/96

Special education is excluded from the following statistics.

Schooling rates for the age group 15 to 18:

Rate	Type of school			
	Secondary total	General secondary	Vocational secondary and basic vocational	
			Total	Basic vocational
Gross	86.4	26.3	60.1	27.8
Net	80.1	25.9	54.2	27.2

Number of pupils, teachers and schools

	Type of school			
	Total	General secondary	Vocational secondary	Basic vocational
Pupils	2 223 478	682 115	846 398	694 965
Full-time teachers	115 157	33 752	49 861	31 544
Schools	8 860	1 688	4 830	2 342
Pupils/year	29	29	30	28
Pupils/teacher	19	20	17	22

5. Post-secondary education

Post-secondary schools prepare students for work in blue-collar and equivalent occupations or in occupations and specialities that require secondary vocational qualifications. The period of instruction varies depending on the occupation and is specified in the Classification of Occupations. For the majority of occupations it is two years, for some only one year.

Students in these schools are trained as nurses, accountants, administrative personnel for enterprises and hotels, computer specialists or librarians. The majority are women. Those who complete a course of study for a blue-collar occupation receive the title of qualified worker in the acquired occupation. Those who have completed a two-year course of study or non-worker speciality receive the title of technician or other title listed in the Classification of Occupations and Vocational Education Specialities.

There are at least 942 post-secondary schools which belong to the third level of education (tertiary education), although in Poland they are considered as secondary vocational colleges.

6. Initial vocational training

Initial vocational training does not exist as such in the school system in Poland. The form in which it does exist covers a relatively small number of young people.

Initial vocational training is regulated by the Act on Employment and Measures to Combat Unemployment of 1994 and the Education System Act of 1991. Initial training is offered, as in other countries, to young persons who leave school after the age of 15 with few, if any, formal educational qualifications and who wish to enter the labour market. For the most part it is intended for pupils who have performed badly in their compulsory education and for young job-seekers without qualifications.

According to the Council of Ministers' Regulation of 23 May 1995, tasks connected with the employment and training of young people over 15 years of age are to be carried out by Voluntary Labour Corps (*OHP*). These institutions organise training centres in which deprived or maladjusted young people supplement their education and acquire vocational qualifications. Voluntary Labour Corps are also responsible for the organization of vocational practice periods, for the organization of individual and group employment and for the organization of public works.

Voluntary Labour Corps are well defined in various legal Acts, with the principles and forms of activity defined in detail.

Among the Voluntary Labour Corps it is possible to distinguish the following: Labour Corps, Training Centres and Youth Labour Offices. All those three types of institutions comprised more than 400 units in 1996 and about 26 000 participants. Short-term employment has been found for about 50 000 participants. The participants' characteristics are as follows: 50% have not completed primary school; 40% come from one-parent families or from orphanages; about 25% are delinquents.

Education superintendents are responsible for setting out the conditions for the organization and activities of Voluntary Labour Corps, as well as for the educational supervision of the training provided by them. The training is conducted according to the curricula which are used in different types of vocational colleges. Teachers, trainers and instructors employed in Voluntary Labour Corps undergo in-service training in accordance with the rules governing the training of state school teachers.

Voluntary Labour Corps are financed from the state budget.

7. Higher education

7.1. Types of institutions

There are various types of higher education institutions in Poland. Certain institutions are controlled by the Minister for Education (universities, polytechnics, economics academies, agricultural academies, higher pedagogical schools), others come under the authority of the Minister for Culture (academies of music, academies of fine arts, academies of theatre and cinematography) or the Minister of Health and Social Welfare (medical academies). There are other academies supervised by other Ministries – i.e. academies of physical education and military academies.

According to the *Directory for Candidates for Higher Studies* (1996), secondary school leavers may choose from 99 state centres of higher education and 84 non-state establishments. This means that the total number of higher education establishments in Poland is 173, although the *Statistical Yearbook* 1996 quotes the number 179. The exact number is difficult to determine, since some private institutions are in the process of being set up, or applying for permission to start, some, on the other hand, after obtaining formal permission to open, have not yet started running courses.

According to the *Statistical Yearbook*, there are 179 higher education establishments altogether comprising: 12 universities, 30 polytechnics, 9 agricultural academies, 51 economics academies, 14 higher pedagogical schools, 11 medical academies, 3 maritime academies, 6 physical education academies, 20 fine arts academies, 11 theological academies and 12 others. The total number of students was 794 600 in 1995, of which 88% enrolled in State establishments.

Additionally, there are opportunities to study in 19 higher theological seminaries, 11 ensign schools, 33 teacher training colleges and 54 foreign language teacher training colleges run by superintendents' offices under the authority of the higher education system.

There are higher education institutions in 32 out of the 49 voivodships, while 10 voivodships have only branches of either state or private higher educational establishments. Establishments with certain academic traditions and a sizeable academic community exist in 22 centres. These centres differ in size, and thus the number of higher education institutions, academic teachers, and students varies.

The biggest academic centre is Warsaw, which has the largest student enrolment, the greatest number of higher education institutions and the largest number of teachers. Warsaw University is the largest higher education establishment in Poland. Higher education is highly concentrated in Warsaw and in the seven other biggest towns; about 75 to 78% of all students and academic teachers are gathered there.

7.2. Admission

Before applying for a given course of study, all candidates are required to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate (*matura*).

Admission based on entrance examinations, as opposed to free recruitment, depends in the present system on the higher education establishment itself, or on its faculty or department. In general, faculties with high demands organise competitive entrance examinations. Types of examinations are as follows: written, oral, tests and interviews to check motivation and general attitude. In some faculties where free recruitment prevails, the first year of study is used to select the students who will be admitted to further studies. This procedure is not formal, however. This autonomy was given to higher education establishments by the Act on Higher Education Establishments of 12 September 1990. Therefore, due to this Act, there are not only many different admissions procedures, but these are constantly changing.

7.3. Fees

Day classes in state establishments of higher education are, in the majority, free of charge, although there is an increasing trend for more state schools to organise fee-paying extra-mural or evening classes, and sometimes, but very rarely, also fee-paying day classes. According to the Act of 1990, the previous obligation

to have some work experience in order to be admitted to non-day classes was abolished. Since then, the proportion of students undertaking extra-mural or evening study courses, i.e. those for which fees are charged, increases every year.

Tuition fees in either state or non-state establishments of higher education vary greatly, and the amount depends not only on the real cost of studies, but also on the interest displayed in different fields of study. This applies, for example, to economics and law, where the number of students admitted to fee-paying courses has shown the largest growth and tuition fees are sometimes very high.

Students in almost all educational establishments are entitled to medical care and reduced fares on public transport.

7.4. Academic year

The university academic year begins on 1 October and normally ends at the end of June. It is divided into two semesters. Apart from the summer holidays, there are also the following breaks: two weeks' winter holidays (first half of February) and two shorter breaks around Christmas and Easter.

7.5. Assessment

Students are assessed by means of oral or written examinations at the end of each lecture course. The different types of examinations are generally defined by ordinances of the authorities for higher education. They follow the programme of each course. Lecturers, upon agreement with the faculty authorities and in accordance with the programme requirements, decide when, how often during the semester, and by which of the prescribed methods, the students are assessed.

Final examinations are on the topic taken for the thesis for the Master's degree or Licentiate. They are set by an examining board: the thesis supervisor, the reviewer and members of the examining board. The final mark obtained by the student (the degree mark) is a composite of the average mark obtained during the course of studies (50%), the mark for the thesis (25%) and the final examination mark (25%).

7.6. Courses/qualifications

Since 1991 the uniform system of Master's degree courses offered by higher education establishments has begun to be replaced by a more diverse system. It is partly connected with new regulations and resolutions on higher education. Faculties and departments not having the required number of academic teachers with a doctorate (professors and lecturers) cannot offer Master's degree courses in their particular fields, but only diplomas which confer vocational qualifications.

Apart from engineering, other vocational courses are not yet very important. Polytechnics and agricultural academies are implementing a system based on parallel programmes of studies. There are three-year courses leading to the professional title of licentiate, four-year courses leading to the professional title of engineer, and five-year Master's degree courses which lead to the professional title of Master (Master Engineer). This title is equivalent to a Master's degree at university (MA), to the title of physician at medical academies, and to the Master's degree at art schools.

At universities, most study courses are primarily aimed at providing an academic education in conjunction with career preparation leading to an academic degree – Master of Arts. These courses last five years (six years at medical academies). There is also a new trend being followed by newly-founded departments. The majority of universities have set up foreign language colleges. In some faculties, the uniform Master's degree programme has been divided into two courses: a three-year course leading to the title of licentiate, followed by a two-year Master's degree course. A similar trend – the division of the five-year Master's degree courses into two separate courses – can also be noted in science faculties in the universities (mathematics, physics).

7.7. Statistics 1995/96

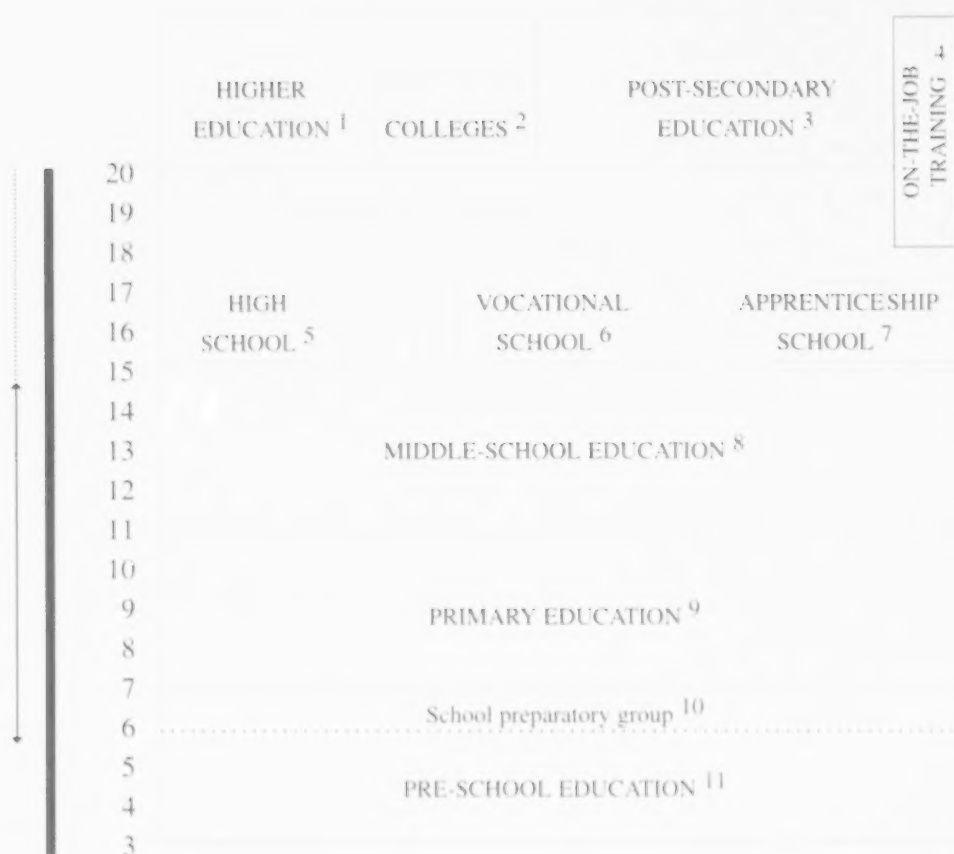
Number of students, teachers and schools	
Students	794 600
Full-time teachers	24 446*
Schools	179

* for the academic year 1994/95

Romania

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Romania



- 1: ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT SUPERIOR
- 2: COLEGII
- 3: ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT POSTLICEAL
- 4: INSTRUIRE LA LOCUL DE MUNCĂ
- 5: LICEU
- 6: ȘCOALĂ PROFESIONALĂ
- 7: ȘCOALĂ DE UCENICI
- 8: ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT GIMNAZIAL
- 9: ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT PRIMAR
- 10: AN PREPARATOR
- 11: ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT PRESCOLAR (GRĂDINIȚĂ)

Romania

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

Romania has an area of 238 391 square kilometres and a population of 22 680 951 inhabitants.

According to the Constitution adopted in 1992, Romania is a presidential republic. The Romanian bicameral Parliament, comprising a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate, enacts all legislation. Executive power is exercised by the Government.

As regards administration, Romania is divided into 40 counties plus the capital city, Bucharest. Romania has 67 cities, 195 towns and 2 686 villages. The main religion is Orthodox (86.8%).

In 1994, the employment sectors were distributed as follows: 30% industry, 35.6% agriculture, 11% services. The unemployment rate was 10.9%.

1.2. Basic principles concerning education

In Romania, the right to education is conferred by the Constitution. According to Education Act 84/1995, education is a national priority and should contribute to a free and harmonious development of the individual and of his/her autonomous and creative personality.

1.3. Legislation and the education reform

In 1995, the Romanian Parliament adopted a new education law designed to offer the legislative framework necessary for an overall reform of the education system in Romania. The reform aims at two components of the system: primary and secondary education and higher education.

The Teaching Staff Regulations, which have been promulgated in June 1997 by Parliament, regulate the appointment, transfer, dismissal and situation of teaching staff and also cover school psychology services.

The reform of primary and secondary education (1994-99), has two major objectives:

- to modernize and improve the quality of primary and secondary education, by reforming the education system (curricula, syllabi, textbooks, assessment, and initial and in-service teacher training);
- to reform the system of financing education and financial administration in education.

The strategy developed by the Romanian Government in order to reform this component of the education system is supported by a \$50 million loan from the IBRD (May 1994). Vocational training reform started in 1995, with support from the EU PHARE Programme (25 million ECU).

Higher education reform was initiated in 1990 and will take 8 to 10 years. Its main objectives are as follows:

- to change the relationships between the Government (Ministry of Education) and the higher education institutions by enhancing university autonomy;
- to modernize and improve the quality of education;
- to create mechanisms and procedures for academic assessment and accreditation of educational institutions;
- to introduce new financing mechanisms.

To attain these objectives an amount of \$84 million has been allocated. This amount is composed of: a grant offered by the European Union (PHARE Programme) equivalent to \$9.6 million, a loan from the World Bank for \$50 million and a contribution from the Romanian Government equivalent to \$24 million.

1.4. Administration

Traditionally, the Romanian education system has been centralized. On the basis of the Education Law, the Government formulates education policy, which is then implemented by the Ministry of Education.

1.4.1. Central authorities

The Ministry of Education is organized and operates in conformity with the Education Act. Legislation is passed by Parliament which also decides on the funding of Government appropriations to the education system. The Ministry of Education manages the national education system and is organized in several departments.

The Department for Pre-University Education manages the nursery schools and primary school, middle school, vocational school, secondary school and post-secondary education. It approves the study programmes, analytical curricula, and the rules for the organization and operation of inspectorates and coordinates, as provided for under the law, the appointment, transfer, dismissal and situation of the teaching, managerial guidance and inspection staff in the public education system and its subordinate units. It is responsible for teacher training and upgrading and for the identification and appropriate education of the most able pupils. It decides on the structure of the school year, examination sessions, competition times, and school holidays for the public pre-university system and it evaluates the pre-university system. It coordinates entrance and graduation examinations in education units, as well as school competitions.

The Department for Higher Education and Scientific Research manages higher education, coordinates research activities in higher education and approves the rules for the organization and operation of subordinate units in accordance with the law, develops a framework methodology for examinations for entrance to higher education, and coordinates the activities of university libraries.

The Department of International Relations, jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, develops collaboration strategies with other states and international bodies specialising in education and cooperates on the basis of protocols with the states where persons of Romanian nationality or origin live, in order to promote and carry on education in their mother tongue.

The Department for Education Strategy and Development makes diagnoses and forecasts for education restructuring and modernization, ensures compliance with the law in the organization, management and provision of education, and formulates and implements medium- and long-term education and education-reform strategies.

The Department of Human and Financial Resources distributes resources for education to higher education institutions and to the inspectorates. The inspectorates distribute the funds received to each local education unit through subordinates entitled to authorize credits on the basis of the state-budgeted percentage per pre-school child, pupil or student in respect of the level and specifics of training.

There are also other departments such as: Education of National Minorities, Coordination of the Higher Education Reform Project, Coordination of the Pre-University Reform Project, Physical Resources, Financial Control, European Integration, Extra-Curricular Activities, the Socrates National Agency, and the Leonardo National Agency.

1.4.2. Regional authorities

A school inspectorate, headed by an inspector general, has been established in each county. The inspectorate is structured as follows:

- a managing board composed of: the inspector general (president), the deputy inspectors general, subject inspectors, the director of the Teachers' Resource Centre, the chief accountant and the legal adviser of the inspectorate;

- an advisory council composed of heads of educational institutions, teachers and professors of renown, parents, and representatives of the local authorities, of the religious communities and of local companies.

The inspector-general, the deputy inspectors general and the head of the Teachers' Resource Centre are appointed by the Minister for Education.

The main responsibilities of the County School Inspectorates are as follows:

- to recommend the local school network to the Ministry of Education;
- to create, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, public educational institutions: nursery schools, primary schools, lower secondary schools, and institutions for vocational and apprenticeship training;
- to provide the appropriate personnel for the educational institutions;
- to organize specialization courses for the teachers and professors; to organize scientific research;
- to coordinate the organization of entrance examinations, degree examinations and school competitions;
- to monitor the education system in subordinate institutions;
- to coordinate the activities of the Teachers' Resource Centre and of school libraries.

1.4.3. Institutional levels

Primary and secondary education institutions are directed by their heads. According to the law, the heads are assisted in their management duties by a School Board and a Management Board.

The School Board has a decision-making role in the field of education and training. Its members are the teachers working in the school. The head chairs the School Board.

The Management Board has a decision-making role only in respect of school management. Its members are the head, some members of the School Board, the chief accountant, representatives of pupils (only for upper secondary schools), parents, local authorities and local companies.

The head and the assistant heads are appointed by the Inspector-General.

The responsibilities of the teachers are established in the Teaching Staff Regulations Act 128/1997.

1.5. Inspection and evaluation at higher levels

According to Education Act 84/1995 (Chapter IV), an evaluation of the educational system is conducted by the Ministry of Education, via specific institutions and bodies, on the basis of existing regulations.

For primary and secondary education, this activity is carried out by inspectors from the Ministry of Education and from the County School Inspectorates. They take into account a series of global indicators such as: number of pupils, school attendance, compliance with national standards, the achievement of the aims of the syllabuses, etc.

The school heads and the inspectors general are obliged to write an annual report on the education situation. This report is presented to the local authorities (Prefecture and County Council) and to the Ministry of Education.

The Minister for Education presents an annual report on the national education system at a meeting of Parliament. The report is then published.

1.6. Financing

Public education institutions are financed by the state budget approved by Parliament. The education budget must be at least 4% of GDP.

According to Act 10/1991 on public finance, the Ministry of Education establishes the budget that will be allocated to each institution. The Ministry distributes the approved budgets to the subordinate units and to the County School Inspectorates. The latter distribute the budget to their subordinate units - the education institutions.

According to Education Act 84/1995, expenditure related to the repair and maintenance of primary and secondary schools is met by the local authorities out of special funds received from the government, the local budget and their own resources.

The Ministry of Education also finances higher education, taking into account the recommendations of the National Council for the Financing of Higher Education. The funds to finance research in higher education are allocated by the Ministry of Education on the recommendation of the National Council for University Research.

The reform programme for higher education includes substantial changes in the field of financial administration, to comply with the principle of the autonomy of universities.

- The institutions are autonomous and they decide themselves on how to use the funds received.
- They have complete financial autonomy regarding the creation and administration of their own resources.
- Institutions have the right to demand fees from the students, etc.

1.7. Private education

In Romania, private education was re-established after 1990 and covers all forms of education, from nursery schools to universities.

According to the law, every private education institution should function on a non-profit-making basis, provide education regardless of religion, ethnic origin, etc., and comply with national standards. Accredited private educational institutions have organizational and functional autonomy (employment of teachers, establishment of fees, etc.).

The education plans and curricula of these institutions are approved by the Ministry of Education.

Statistics 1995/96

Middle schools	1
Secondary schools	5
Post-secondary schools	45
Total	51

Source: Ministry of Education.

1.8. Advisory bodies

According to Education Act 84/1995, the Ministry of Education is assisted in the decision-making process by the following advisory bodies:

- The National Council for the Attestation of Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates makes appointments to directorships of doctoral programmes, based on proposals from the institutions offering the programme. (The right to direct doctoral programmes is conferred by an order of the Minister for Education.) The Council also makes proposals for doctoral programmes and validates the Ph.D. diplomas.
- The National Council for University Research evaluates the Universities' research programmes. (Research contracts are financed competitively out of the state budget on the basis of evaluations made by the Council.)
- The Rectors National Council is an informal body consisting of the heads of all institutions of higher education and provides a forum for cooperation between universities.
- The National Council for the Financing of Higher Education proposes the criteria and mechanisms necessary for granting scholarships and other forms of financial support and also has advisory status, especially in regard to external financing.
- The Librarians National Council is a consultative body consisting of heads of the specialized library network of the Ministry of Education.

- The National Councils on specific subjects taught in the pre-university education system (mathematics, Romanian language and literature, history, English, etc.) make proposals for the study plans and analytical curricula to the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education also consults national scientific associations of teaching staff and nationally-recognized students' organizations as well as the teaching staff unions.

The Institute for Educational Sciences, established in 1990, is also subordinate to the Ministry of Education. Its main objective is to provide the decision-makers in the education field with information necessary to manage the reform of the Romanian education system.

2. Pre-school education (nursery schools)

Pre-school education covers the 3- to 7-year-old age group. This type of education is provided in special institutions – nursery schools – mostly public. Nursery schools are established by county school inspectorates. Local companies, other organizations and individuals can create and finance nursery schools, with the approval of the school inspectorates. The activities of private nursery schools are supervised by the inspectorates, in order to ensure that the quality standards necessary in the education process are met.

Romanian pre-school education includes institutions where teaching is carried out in the Romanian language and institutions where teaching is in the languages of the national minorities.

Nursery school attendance is optional, except the last year which is compulsory, and it is completely free of charge; for the year 1995/96 the attendance rate was 58.3% for pre-school education as a whole.

In order to ensure continuity between pre-school and primary education and to reduce the sociocultural handicap for children from disadvantaged families, the new Education Act (1995) stipulates the gradual establishment of a compulsory pre-school class. This will include 5- to 6- (7-)year-olds.

The main objectives of pre-school education are the socialization and the mental, emotional, cognitive and intellectual development of children. To achieve these objectives, a series of activities are carried out with the purpose of helping children to:

- learn and use the language correctly in various communication situations (including foreign languages – English, French or German – in some institutions);
- acquire the ability to work with figures and geometry;
- acquire knowledge regarding the natural and social environment;
- develop abilities in sports and the arts;
- develop creativity;
- encouraging autonomy, etc.

Private and public nursery schools offer various types of programme: normal programmes (approximately 4 or 5 hours in the morning), long programmes (8 to 9 hours) and weekly programme (five days per week). For the last two types of programme, 50% of the cost (meals, maintenance) is funded by the state.

The structure of the school year in nursery schools is practically the same as that in general compulsory education: three terms, a summer holiday, winter and spring holidays (Christmas and Easter). Nursery schools are in most cases subordinate to general schools (years 1 to 4 or years 1 to 8).

The classes in nursery schools are mixed and organized according to age group. They comprise an average of 15 pupils (a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20). In localities with a reduced number of pupils (generally in rural areas), classes can be formed without taking age groups into account.

At the present time, no assessment (of pupils) is undertaken in pre-school education, although their mental and physical development is monitored. Pupils are not required to repeat a class, but are automatically promoted. Children with mental or sensory disabilities are referred by psycho-medical commissions to special forms of education.

2.1. Teachers

Teachers in nursery schools are educators (*educatoare*) who have completed five years of study in upper secondary teacher-training schools after completing general compulsory education.

Nursery schools also have *institutori*, teachers trained in teacher-training colleges in a two-year course, for those who have completed an upper secondary teacher-training school, or in a three-year course, for those who have completed another type of upper secondary school.

Every teacher is in charge of one class for at least one school year. Teachers are appointed under contract on a permanent basis, to full-time posts, or in some cases to part-time posts. In nursery schools where children are taught foreign languages, specialist staff are appointed.

The right of teachers to in-service training is guaranteed by the Ministry of Education. The training is provided in upper secondary teacher-training schools and colleges and consists of methodology, scientific and specific activities.

2.2. Statistics 1995/96

Number of children	Number of teachers	Number of institutions
697 888	38 915	12 722

Number of pupils/teacher = 17.9

Source: National Commission for Statistics, Bucharest, 1996.

3. Compulsory education

According to Article 6 of the Education Act, all Romanian citizens are obliged to receive education for a period of eight years after pre-school education. (The last year of pre-school education is also compulsory.) This eight-year period includes primary education (years 1-4) and lower secondary education at a *gimnaziu* (years 5-8).

According to the law, the obligation to attend school terminates when pupils are 16 years old or when they have completed the lower secondary school, whichever occurs first.

4. Primary education

Primary education provides a general education for the first four years of school. Children can obtain primary education both in Romanian or in the language of one of the national minorities. Usually, primary schools operate only in the morning. Primary education is provided in three types of school, offering the same structure of education, but covering different levels:

- schools with years 1 to 4;
- schools with years 1 to 8 (institutions covering primary and lower secondary education);
- schools with years 1 to 12 (13) (institutions covering primary and full secondary education).

Children are invited to attend school in their seventh year. At the request of their parents or legal guardians, children can attend school in their sixth year, if they have reached an appropriate stage of physical and mental development.

Primary education focuses on the mental and physical development of children. More specifically, primary schools help the children to:

- learn the Romanian language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) as a means of communication;
- learn to count and practise the four basic mathematical operations, and oral and written calculation;
- acquire knowledge, respect and interest for the environment;
- acquire basic scientific knowledge;
- develop an awareness of moral and civic values;
- develop a love for their country and a respect for the historical past of the Romanian people;
- develop their own personality harmoniously;
- acquire sporting abilities and receive health education;
- develop civilized behaviour and moral qualities: honesty, truthfulness, respect for parents, people, and work.

The learning process is carried out in classes, organized according to age groups. The number of hours per week is gradually increased: 20 hours in the 1st year; 21 hours in the 2nd year; 22 hours in the 3rd year; and 24 hours in the 4th year.

Classes on average have 20 pupils, with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 30.

In regions with a reduced number of pupils, classes may have fewer pupils. As a result, teachers work with more than one class simultaneously, if the Ministry of Education gives its approval.

4.1. Curriculum

The main objective of the primary education curriculum is to provide an all-round education. The following aspects are given special attention:

- scientific knowledge about the world and human beings, the environment and environmental protection;
- knowledge of the national language and, beginning in the 2nd year, of foreign languages;
- knowledge of mathematics;
- knowledge of history and civics;
- artistic education (painting and music); development of an aesthetic sense;
- sports and physical education;
- health education;
- knowledge of human and children's rights and the development of democratic behaviour.

The education plan for primary schools covers five fields of study; humanities, artistic, scientific, physical and religious education. The number of hours allocated to each of these fields varies with their importance: half of the number of hours in the week are allocated to humanities (subjects like Romanian, foreign languages, Romanian history and civics). Scientific education takes up 25% of the number of hours per week; artistic and physical education, 10-15%; and religious education, one hour per week.

What is important is the focus on integrated and interdisciplinary approaches, such as Communication (2 to 4 hours a week), Sciences (one hour a week) and Civic Education (one hour a week in years 3 and 4).

4.2. Assessment

Pupils are assessed continuously by the teacher. There are also assessments at regular intervals in the form of school exercises, especially in the basic subjects.

A teacher can compel a pupil to repeat a class, if the marks obtained (ranging from 1 to 10) are not satisfactory. There is no examination at the end of primary school.

4.3. Teachers

Primary school teachers (*învățători*) are trained in upper secondary teacher-training schools or colleges. The college training (special short-term education) lasts for two years (for students from an upper secondary teacher-training school) or three years (for those from other types of upper secondary schools).

Generally, the learning process is managed by a single teacher for each class; some subjects (religion, foreign languages, physical education and music) are taught by specialist teachers (*profesori*). They have a diploma and have completed a long- or a short-term form of higher education, depending on the subject they are teaching.

4.4. Statistics 1995/96

Number of pupils	1 375 510
Total number of teachers	65 590
Teachers for primary school (<i>învățători</i>)	61 850
Specialist teachers (<i>profesori</i>)	3 749
Number of institutions	13 817

Number of pupils/teacher = 21

Source: National Commission for Statistics, Bucharest, 1996.

5. Lower secondary education (*Gimnaziu*)

Lower secondary education covers the last four years of compulsory education. According to the Education Act (Art. 21), lower secondary education can be provided in two types of school (offering the same structure of education):

- schools with years 1 to 8;
- schools with years 1 to 12 (or 13).

Exceptionally, lower secondary schools can offer evening classes or extra-mural classes for pupils who are two years or more older than the other pupils in the respective classes.

In lower secondary schools, classes have an average of 25 pupils (a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 30).

The number of hours per week is: 25 for year 5, 29 for year 6, 31 for year 7 and 32 for year 8.

5.1. Curriculum

The education plan for lower secondary schools covers six fields of study:

- Humanities and social education, taking 30 to 40% of the total number of hours per week: 10 out of 25 hours in year 5, 11 out of 29 in year 6, 12 out of 31 in year 7 and 13 out of 32 in year 8. Almost half of these hours are devoted to the study of Romanian language and literature (5 hours in year 5 and 4 hours in years 6 to 8). The rest is distributed among: first foreign language – 2 hours/week (years 5 to 8), history – 2 hours/week (years 5 to 8), second foreign language – 2 hours/week (beginning in the 6th year), civics – 1 hour/week (years 7 and 8), Latin – 1 hour/week (year 8) and religion (optional subject, 1 hour/week, years 5 to 8).
- Basic science education, with a similar proportion: 8 hours out of 25 in year 5, 11 out of 29 in year 6, 12 out of 31 in year 7 and 12 out of 31 in year 8. The most important subject is mathematics: 4 hours/week in year 5, 8 in year 6 and 4 in years 7 and 8. The rest of the time is distributed as follows: biology (2 hours/week in years 5 to 8), geography (2 hours/week in years 5 to 8), physics (2 hours/week in years 6 to 8) and chemistry (2 hours/week in years 7 and 8).
- Artistic education – 2 hours/week in years 5 to 8 (1 hour for music and 1 hour for drawing and painting).
- Technological education (2 hours/week in years 5 to 8).
- Physical education (2 hours/week in years 5 to 8).
- Open discussion (one hour/week in years 5 to 8).

5.2. Assessment

In addition to continuous assessment, lower secondary education is concluded by an examination (*examen de capacitate*), organized on the basis of the methodology developed by the Ministry of Education. The examination includes the following subjects: Romanian Language and Literature, mathematics, Romanian history and Romanian geography. Pupils belonging to national minorities and studying in languages of the national minorities have a supplementary examination in the language and literature of their minority.

Pupils have to pass this examination to receive a leaving certificate. This certificate entitles them to apply for the entrance examination for upper secondary school.

5.3. Teachers (*Profesori*)

Lower secondary school teachers (*profesori*) have a diploma and have completed a specialized short- or long-term form of higher education, depending on the subject they are teaching.

Every subject in lower secondary education is taught by specialist teachers. Technological education is taught by engineers. In the rural environment, agriculture is taught by biology teachers. The open discussion sessions are taken by one of the class teachers who is also responsible for coordinating the education activities of the class and maintaining relations with parents.

5.4. Statistics 1995/96

Number of pupils	1 130 073
Total number of teachers	98 776
Teachers	94 845
Instructors	3 931
Number of institutions	7 655

Number of pupils/lower secondary education teacher (years 5 to 8) = 11.4

Number pupils/compulsory education teacher (years 1 to 8) = 15.2

Source: National Commission for Statistics, Bucharest, 1996.

6. Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education covers general upper secondary schools (*liceu*), vocational training schools and apprenticeship schools. This level of education is not compulsory.

6.1. Upper secondary schools

Upper secondary schools are mostly public (99.5%) but a small number of them are private. Teaching is carried out in the Romanian language, but there are also upper secondary schools where the teaching is carried out in the languages of the ethnic minorities.

Upper secondary education is organized as follows: day classes over a four-year period (years 9 to 12) and evening classes or extra-mural classes over a five-year period (years 9 to 13). The latter are designed for those who, are involved in other activities in addition to the school programme. Public upper secondary education is free. Pupils from economically disadvantaged families do not have to pay for textbooks.

58% of Romanian children attend upper secondary schools. In order to be admitted to these schools, pupils apply to sit an entrance examination, after they have completed general compulsory education and obtained a

leaving certificate. Pupils can apply for the examination to gain access to upper secondary schools (day classes) immediately after lower secondary school or two years thereafter. If they are more than 17 years of age, they may not attend day classes.

The upper secondary schools are of several types: humanities, information science, teacher-training, technology, economics and administration, agriculture, forestry, military science, art, sports and theology. All types give access to higher education and most of them also offer a qualification and therefore the opportunity to obtain a job after graduation.

The classes are mixed, and are organized according to age group. Classes on average have 25 pupils, a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30.

Most upper secondary schools function as independent institutions. Some function together with lower secondary and primary schools, and some are integrated in combined groups of schools (technical upper secondary schools) together with vocational training schools.

All upper secondary schools work two shifts: classes in the morning and classes in the afternoon. For those offering evening classes, there are three shifts.

The school programme consists of an average of 6 hours per day and 30 hours per week, with some differences, according to the type of upper secondary school and the year of study. Pupils attend classes five days per week. The school year is divided into three terms, summer, winter (Christmas) and spring (Easter) holidays.

6.1.1. Curriculum

The education plan covers five groups of subjects:

- **humanities and social education** (Romanian language and literature, two foreign languages, world literature, history, psychology, logic, economics, philosophy and also Latin, Greek, aesthetics, history of music, etc.);
- **basic scientific education** (mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, biology);
- **optional subjects** (examples: for a basic scientific education – laboratory techniques applied to physics, biology, or chemistry, information science, history of science. For humanities and social education – elements of conservation, reconstitution and museum organization, shorthand and typing, general linguistic and literary theory, elements of archaeology and palaeography);
- **physical education;**
- **open discussion** (civics, health education, ecological education).

The importance of each group varies according to the profile of the secondary school, the greatest variations being at the level of humanities/social and scientific subjects. In upper secondary schools such as those for art, sports, technology or economics, for example, the optional subjects are more important and usually take up 30% of the total number of hours; these upper secondary schools also have more teaching hours per week (33 to 35 hours).

In upper secondary schools for the **humanities** (philology schools, languages schools, history-social sciences schools), the humanities and social subjects prevail, with approximately 50 to 60% of the time, scientific education having a share of 25 to 30%.

In **science** upper secondary schools (mathematics-physics, physics-chemistry, chemistry-biology), scientific education prevails, with approximately 50% of the time, whereas education in the humanities has a share of about 30%.

In **teacher-training** upper secondary schools, humanities and science education have a similar share – about 30% of the time. An important role (about 30%) is dedicated to specific training (methods, educational psychology, art).

In upper secondary schools for **technology, agriculture, forestry, economics**, etc., the humanities, science and specific training are of equal importance. In the last two years of study, attention focuses on specific training.

For the last two types of upper secondary school, the educational curriculum includes hours of specific practical activities in businesses, schools and other institutions. These activities are given greater importance in the last two years of study.

6.1.2. Assessment

Pupils are subject to continuous assessment in all subjects. The assessment is mostly oral and individual, based on numerical marks from 1 to 10. For some subjects, pupils are given written assessments during the term and at the end of the term (final assessment). Responsibility for the assessments lies with the teachers – they decide (depending upon the knowledge acquired) if a pupil should be required to repeat a class or not. Pupils in the last two years of study are subject to tests set by the County School Inspectorates.

The upper secondary school ends with a final examination (*bacalaureat*), under the aegis of a commission established by County School Inspectorates.

Article 26 of the 1995 Education Act establishes the subjects covered by the final examination:

- Romanian language and literature – written and oral;
- language and literature of the national minorities – for pupils doing their studies in one of the languages of the national minorities;
- mathematics – written; in humanities, theology, art and sports upper secondary schools, pupils can choose a humanities subject instead – written;
- Romanian history – oral;
- one of the foreign languages studied – oral;
- an optional subject – physics, chemistry, biology, Romanian geography – oral;
- an optional subject, chosen by the pupil, different from the above subjects – oral.

If they obtain their leaving certificate, pupils can apply for the entrance examination to gain admission to higher education. If they pass the examination, and a practical test and write a paper concerning a specific subject, they also obtain a certificate granting access to a job.

6.1.3. Teachers (*Profesori*)

In the upper secondary schools, all subjects are taught by specialist teachers, holding a diploma and having completed a long course of higher education, depending on the subjects they are teaching.

Technological education is provided by engineers, trained in polytechnics.

Teachers teach the same subject in several classes. Every class has a class teacher who coordinates the education activities of the class and maintains relations with parents.

The teacher's right to in-service training is granted by the Ministry of Education, which coordinates and finances it.

6.1.4. Statistics 1995/96

Type of secondary school	Number of pupils	Number of teachers	Number of institutions
Total	787 211	62 409	1 284
Theoretical (humanities and science studies)	311 428	19 028	439
Technology	243 384	26 740	470
Economics and administration	67 105	3 367	53
Agriculture and forestry	51 241	5 011	135
Information science	55 914	852	10
Metrology	1 614	61	1
Sports	12 320	1 128	26
Art	8 788	2 764	42
Teacher training	18 693	2 207	40
Military science	3 730	272	8
Theology	12 252	860	54
Special (for children with disabilities)	742	119	6

Number of pupils/teacher = 12.6

Source: National Commission for Statistics, Bucharest, 1996.

6.2. Initial vocational training in upper secondary education

Initial vocational training in Romania is provided in the following ways:

- in vocational schools;
- in apprenticeship schools;
- through on-the-job training.

Vocational training networks are organized by the Ministry of Education, after consulting the institutions concerned, and covers about 21 sectors (machine construction, electronics, electrotechnics, mining etc.) with about 300 specializations.

Vocational training structures, entrance and final examinations are established by the Ministry of Education.

Vocational schools offer day and evening classes. They are independent or integrated in combined groups of schools. In addition to a vocational training school, a combined group of schools can include an apprenticeship school, a sectoral upper secondary school, a sectoral post-upper secondary school, etc.

The entrance examinations for vocational schools are established by the institutions concerned. Every pupil who has completed lower secondary school studies and obtained a leaving certificate can apply for this examination. The duration of study in vocational schools is 2 to 4 years, depending on the sector.

Vocational schools offer qualification and re-qualification courses, on a contractual basis, at the request of companies and public or private institutions.

Apprenticeship schools function in the framework of vocational schools. Part of the training is in companies. The entrance examination for these schools consists of specific skills tests. Any pupil who has completed lower secondary school education, with or without a leaving certificate, can apply for this examination. The duration of the course is 1 to 3 years.

In vocational education, classes average 25 pupils each, with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30.

On-the-job training is carried out in companies, at their request, and with the assistance of vocational schools which provide the scientific and pedagogical basis for training. This type of training is based on a contract between the company and the student. The contract covers the duration of the training, the duration of practical training, the final examination and certain advantages offered to students during their training.

6.2.1. Curriculum

Education plans and curricula for vocational and apprenticeship schools are developed and approved by the Ministry of Education, after consulting the institutions involved. The present reform of vocational education, supported by the PHARE-VET Programme, has resulted in new curricula that include *inter alia* new modern teaching/learning methods and updated education plans and curricula as a response to the European vocational standards.

Education in vocational and apprenticeship schools is structured in modules. There are four types of modules:

- basic general modules;
- modules for an occupational domain;
- specific modules for job qualifications;
- optional modules.

The importance of basic general modules is greater in the first year and decreases in the following years in favour of modules offering knowledge and skills relating to a specific occupational field. The last year of study focuses on modules specific to job qualifications. Optional modules provide an opportunity to acquire more knowledge and to continue higher education studies.

Before implementing the reform programme for vocational education, the educational plan for the first year of the vocational school was structured as follows:

- social and humanities education (Romanian language and literature, history, civics) - 10%;
- basic scientific education (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, hygiene, ecology) - 20%;
- specific training - 24%;
- practical training - 40%;
- physical education - 3%;
- open discussion classes - 3%;

For the third year, the structure is the following:

- humanities and social education (Romanian language and literature, history, civics) - 2.5%;
- basic scientific education (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, hygiene, ecology) - 2.5%;
- specific training - 24%;
- practical training - 66%;
- physical education - 2.5%;
- open discussion classes - 2.5%.

Besides their compulsory subjects, pupils can attend a maximum of two optional training activities, which include mathematics, physics, biology, a foreign language, computer basics and sports activities. Optional training is provided for groups of 18 to 36 pupils.

Based on the new curricula, within a modular system, new alternative textbooks have been developed, and they have been approved by the Ministry of Education. Teachers have the right to select the textbook most appropriate to the training needs.

In the first years of study, focusing on acquiring the basics of technology, practical training is carried out in school workshops, organized within the school, sometimes with the support of a directly-interested business.

In the last years of study, devoted to specialization and qualification, practical training covers a greater number of hours (over 40%) and is carried out directly in companies in which pupils work together with skilled staff.

The number of study and practical training hours per week varies from 30 to 36.

6.2.2. Assessment

Pupils are subject to continuous assessment during the year by the teacher, in the form of oral or written examinations, depending upon the subject, and sometimes using examinations organized at central level (national and vocational competitions).

Vocational and apprenticeship studies conclude with a final examination and a certificate of qualification that allows the pupil to seek a job.

In order to facilitate the integration of school-leavers into social and economic activities, in compliance with Government Decision No 463/1991, public or private companies receive the equivalent of the unemployment benefit for nine months for every young worker employed.

Pupils qualifying from vocational schools and holding a leaving certificate can apply for the entrance examination to upper secondary schools.

6.2.3. Teachers

In vocational training, subjects are taught by teachers and instructors. Teachers must have a qualification similar to that of teachers in secondary schools. Those who have studied at university or a polytechnic can teach only if they have attended the optional classes in psychology and education.

Instructors organize and coordinate practical activities. The condition for their acceptance as teachers is to have attended a teacher-training course and to possess knowledge, skills and on-the-job experience.

Each county has a teaching staff centre, under the County School Inspectorate. The role of the teaching staff centre is to provide documents and organize training activities for teachers.

7. Post-upper secondary school education

Post-upper secondary school education is a form of vocational training for those who complete secondary school. The duration of study is one to three years. This type of education is organized by the Ministry of Education, sometimes at the request of local companies.

7.1. Curriculum

The profiles, qualifications and curricula of post-secondary school education are established by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The persons requesting such schools also finance them, under contracts concluded with the Ministry of Education. An exception is made for medical post-secondary schools, which are financed by the Ministry of Education (Education Act, Section 51(3)).

State obligations with respect to post-upper secondary education are established every year, by government decision.

7.2. Assessment

Every pupil who finishes secondary school, with or without a leaving certificate can apply for the entrance examination. (A leaving certificate is however required for medical post-upper secondary schools.)

Students are subject to continuous assessment in all subjects, and for some subjects they have to undergo written assessments both during and at the end of term (final assessment). The teachers assume full responsibility for their assessments.

Post-upper secondary school education concludes with a final examination and a leaving certificate. Students who pass the school-leaving examination are issued with a certificate of qualification in their respective skill. Should students fail the examination, they may take it no more than twice within three years after finishing.

7.3. Teachers

Every subject is taught by specialist teachers. They hold a diploma and have completed a long course of higher education, depending on the subject they are teaching.

7.4. Statistics 1995/96

	Number of schools	Students	Teachers
Vocational schools	773	212 326	6 403
Apprenticeship schools	-	72 697	1 443
Post-upper secondary schools (including foremen schools)	624 (179)	54 642 (13 366)	2 192 (233)

Source: National Commission for Statistics.

8. Higher education

Romania has both public and private higher education institutions. Higher education is provided in education and research institutions, universities, institutes, academies, conservatories and university colleges (which are distinct from universities proper).

Higher education is organized in two types: short courses of higher education (three-year programmes provided in university colleges) and long courses of higher education (four to six years) provided in universities, academies, conservatories.

In the higher education system, the teaching staff includes: junior assistant lecturers, assistant lecturers, lecturers, readers, professors and consulting professors with an initial long-term university education. Teaching positions are awarded on the basis of a competition. Readerships and professorships are certified by the National Council for the Attestation of Academic Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates.

The higher education institutions comprise several faculties, university colleges, divisions, departments and small pilot units specialized in researches and micro-production. The faculty represents the functional basic unit of the higher education institution and is composed of one or more specialist sections. The university college is a functional unit under a higher education institution or a faculty.

Post-graduate education offers specialization or an extension of the education provided in universities.

8.1. Entrance examination

Pupils who qualify from high schools and have a leaving certificate can apply for the entrance examination for higher education institutions offering short or long courses. The institutions themselves organize the entrance examination, based on general criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

Admission to post-graduate educational institutions is regulated, under Section. 71 – (1) of the Education Act, by an entrance examination for a Master's degree, doctorate or post-graduate academic studies, or on request, for specialist studies.

8.2. Financing of studies

Public higher education is free. Fees are payable for applications for entrance examinations and for repeating the final or degree examination. Fees can be charged for activities outside the education plan, if they are requested by students and approved by the faculty council. The amounts to be paid and exemption from fees are determined by the university senate (Education Act, Art. 581).

8.3. Academic year

The academic year begins on 1 October and ends in most cases on 15 June. The year is divided into two semesters. Students have a summer holiday, a Christmas holiday and another holiday at the end of the first semester.

8.4. Studies/qualifications

Long courses of higher education cover the following types of studies:

- **university** education (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography-geology, philology, philosophy, educational psychology and sociology, etc.);
- **technical** education (mechanics, electricity, chemistry, oil, architecture, building, forestry, aircraft and shipbuilding);
- **agricultural** education (agriculture, zoo-technical studies, veterinary studies, etc.);
- **medical and pharmaceuticals** education (medicine, stomatology, pharmaceutical studies);
- **law** (legal sciences, administrative law);
- **artistic** education (theatre, music, fine arts, choreography, cinematography and television, museography).

Short courses of higher education are provided in colleges which, although administratively included in universities, provide distinct programmes and qualifications. Colleges are established with the approval of the Ministry of Education, on the proposal of the respective higher education institutions (Education Act, Section 62 - (2)).

Short courses of higher education cover pedagogical, economic, administrative and technical studies.

Students who graduate from colleges and have a diploma can continue their studies in similar faculties in higher education institutions providing long courses after applying to sit the entrance examination. If they pass the examination, they go directly to the third year of the university course (Education Act, Section 65).

8.5. Assessment

In both long-term and short-term higher education, students are assessed through written and oral examinations. Examinations are held at the end of each semester (in February and July for state institutions); if students do not pass an examination, they can repeat it a month before the academic year begins. Only if they pass all their examinations, are they accepted in the following year of study.

The evaluation of higher education institutions is the task of the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation. Its members are approved by Parliament. The Council comprises nine speciality commissions that evaluate all the existing faculties and colleges every five years, in accordance with criteria which include the content of the education process, research activity, and teacher/student ratios.

8.6. Certification/qualification

Short courses of higher education study end with a degree examination in accordance with the criteria set out by the Ministry of Education, using a methodology worked out by university senates. University-college diploma holders may continue their education either in their field of training or in related fields by sitting an admission examination for a university institution offering long courses up to the student ceiling set by the senate of higher education institutions for the current academic year. (Eligibility criteria are set by the university institutions which provide long courses).

Long higher education studies conclude with a bachelor's degree examination which involves a degree paper or project plus a general and speciality test. The criteria for the organization of the bachelor's degree examination are determined by the Ministry of Education, and the methodology by the university senates.

Students who pass the degree examinations receive a bachelor's degree in the respective area; those who fail can repeat the examination only twice, and not later than five years after finishing. Graduates with a degree can attend a second university without taking an entrance examination, subject to the conditions stipulated by the University Charter.

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Slovakia

	Doctoral (PhD) Study		
		Master's Study	
21/22 20/21		Bachelor's Study	Higher Vocational Education (5)
19/20	Higher Education		(Post-Secondary Education)
18/19 17/18	<i>Gymnasium</i> (3)	Specialized Secondary School (4)	
16/17			Vocational Secondary School
15/16			Apprentice Training Centre
14/15 13 12 11		Lower Secondary Education	Second stage (years 5-9)
10 9 8 7	Primary School (2) First stage (years 1-4)		
6 5 4 3	Nursery school		

- (1) Compulsory education lasts 9 years (6 to 15 year age group). It can be obtained either at primary school or at primary and secondary schools. The last year of compulsory education can be spent at primary school in year 9 or at secondary school in the first year.
- (2) Primary school takes 9 years to complete, the ninth year being voluntary. Primary school has two stages: the first stage with years 1 to 4, the second stage with years 5 to 9. The second stage of primary school is comparable with lower secondary education.
- (3) *Gymnasium* – studies last four years at least and eight years at most. The four-year *gymnasium* course is linked with year 8 or 9 of primary school. The admission to the eight-year *gymnasium* is subject to completing year 4 of primary school. Both courses of study finish with a school-leaving examination (*maturita*) providing access to higher education.
- (4) The conservatory represents a specific type of secondary school, studies take six years (in the field of dance, eight years) and end with the *absolutorium*.
- (5) Higher vocational education: studies are provided in specialized secondary schools and end with the *absolutorium*. Three-year post-secondary study is linked up to successful completing secondary specialized school by school-leaving examination.

1. Responsibilities and administration

1.1. Background

Slovakia covers an area of 49 039 square kilometres and has a population of 5 268 935. The ethnic breakdown of the population is 85.7% Slovaks and 10.8% Hungarians while the remaining 3.5% is made up of Gypsies, Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Germans.

The official language is Slovak. The majority of the population is Roman Catholic (60.4%). Evangelism (Lutheranism) is the second most practised religion, and a significant part of the population of Eastern Slovakia is Greek-Catholic and Orthodox. There are also other smaller religious groups active in Slovakia, e.g. the Jewish community.

The Slovak Republic was founded on 1 January 1993 after the split of the former Czechoslovakia. On 19 January 1993, Slovakia became a member of the United Nations, and on 30 June 1993 a member of the Council of Europe.

The Slovak Republic is headed by the President. The President is elected by the National Council of the Slovak Republic by secret ballot for a five-year term. The President appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and the other members of the government.

The National Council of the Slovak Republic is the only constitutional legislative body. It has 150 deputies who are elected for a four-year term in universal, direct elections by secret ballot. Political parties represented in Parliament are the Movement for Democratic Slovakia, the Party of the Democratic Left, the Slovak National Party, the Christian-Democratic Party, Coexistence and the Hungarian Christian-Democratic Movement.

After the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in November 1989, the most important task of society emerged: the transformation of a centrally-controlled economy into a market economy. This became the highest priority of economic reforms.

Radical reforms were started in January 1991 in Czechoslovakia, with four essential introductory steps: price liberalization, internal convertibility of the currency, a policy of macro-economic stabilization, and privatization. The substance of the reforms has continued in independent Slovakia.

The first stage of reforms in the education system was carried out immediately after the political transformations.

The following changes occurred in 1990:

- elimination from curricula of the aims and content influenced by the previous political ideology. Some textbooks (particularly for civics and history) lost their validity and were replaced by temporary teaching materials;
- the approval of the following changes in the Education Act: compulsory school attendance covered nine years with the intention of gradually transforming the compulsory eight-year schooling to nine years, the possibility of establishing private and denominational schools was legalized, educational humanization has been supported;
- the creation of greater possibilities for the education of children aged 14 to 18 years, decentralization of powers in the decision-making of schools and regions as regards provision of educational programmes according to pupils' and parents' interests and the perspectives of graduates' placement in the labour market and, as a result, the structure of pupil numbers was changed, and in 1990-1995;

- search for suitable alternatives in education-system reforms within the framework of the first stage of transformation;
- development of the OECD study (1992) on possible trends of reform, especially orientated towards university studies;
- preparation of the strategic study within the framework of PHARE programme Labour Market Restructuring (1993) on reform trends in vocational education and training (VET), as well as a feasibility study and a study on financing VET and the implementation of basic recommendations in pilot schools (VET Reform programme);
- analytical studies aimed at promoting education development, curriculum development, the development of quality standards and teacher training within the framework of the PHARE Programme for Renewal of the Education System;
- several domestic proposals on alternative reform trends initiated by various special-purpose groups or by the Ministry of Education and discussed in the mass-media, seminars and conferences, e.g. discussion proposals of the Ministry of Education (1991, 1993), the Constantine project – a long-term project with the view of the future of education in the Slovak Republic (1994), etc.

1.2. Basic principles: education

Education in the Slovak Republic observes the right to education, which should reflect the basic human values contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to education is laid down in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

The Constitution declares that "everybody has the right to a free choice of career and to prepare for it" and that "everybody has the right to free education in primary and secondary schools and also in institutions of higher education, according to the citizen's abilities and possibilities in society". State education is provided free of charge. At schools other than public ones, the education may be provided on a fee-paying basis.

1.3. Distribution of responsibilities

The state provides education particularly through the Government and Parliament in the form of programme declarations of the Government, individual bills, decrees, the state budget, directives, etc.

The responsibility for education lies with the Ministry of Education (*Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky*). Responsibilities concerning secondary vocational education are shared by several ministries – Economic Affairs, Transport, Building Industries and Public Works, Health, Agriculture, Interior and Defence. They cooperate primarily in the provision of vocational training, curriculum development and financing.

In the spirit of the Higher Education Act No. 172/1990 of the Law Code, higher education institutions (except military and police academies) are subordinate to the Ministry of Education. In compliance with this Act the Higher Education Council was established, composed of representatives delegated by the academic senates of the higher education institutions and faculties. The Council represents higher education institutions *vis-à-vis* the Ministry of Education and expresses its opinions on their financing and on other proposals and measures related to higher education institutions.

1.4. Administration

1.4.1. Central level

The Ministry of Education is responsible for education policy, implementation strategy and legislation on education and financing. It determines the network of schools and educational establishments, decides on placing the school or educational institution in the network and on excluding the school from the network.

From the viewpoint of their geographical distribution, primary and secondary schools make up a network that is approved annually by the Ministry of Education. The operation of the school is conditional on being in the school network. The proposal for inclusion or exclusion of the school reform in the school network is proposed by the founder to the Ministry of Education. The school network attained its present form gradually and it is changed each year. Changes in the school network occur, e.g. from dissolution of the school due to a lack of pupils as a result of population migration.

The Ministry of Education allocates funds for education in accordance with the act on the state budget.

1.4.2. Regional level

On 4 July 1996, the National Council passed an Act on the organization of the local state administration.

In the spirit of this Act, school governance powers were transferred to administrative bodies of the local state administration, particularly the departments of education of the regional and district boards. The former local education authorities were dissolved. The regional board is governed by the Mayor who is also responsible for its activities. The Mayor of the regional board is appointed and dismissed by the Government on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior. The regional and district boards are established to act as the local state administration. They establish departments for individual sections of state administration.

Regional and district boards are governed by the Constitution and are state budget organizations. The regional boards are linked to the state budget. In relation to the district boards, they play the role of founder. There are eight regions. The regional board manages secondary schools and other educational establishments.

The departments of education of the district boards are responsible for implementation of education policy in the appropriate districts. They were established in 1996 for nursery schools and primary schools, according to district. At present there are 79 departments of education of the district boards operating in the country with competence for nursery schools and primary schools and other educational establishments.

1.4.3. Institutional level

Primary school, like secondary school, is managed by a headteacher. The headteacher is responsible for implementing legislation, curricula, professional and pedagogical standards of teaching and supervision of the teaching staff. The headteacher cooperates with the school board. The task of the school board is to initiate, advise and help the headteacher to run the school, to support the interests of parents, pupils and teachers, and generally help improve the teaching process. The school board acts as the headteacher's supervisory authority and is made up of elected representatives of teachers and other staff, parents, students (at secondary school) and delegated local-authority representatives.

Institutions of higher education are self-governing bodies. The Academic Senate of a higher education institution (university, faculty) and the Scientific Council of a higher education institution (university, faculty) are academic bodies. The members of these bodies are elected by the academic community. The academic officials of universities are rectors and vice-rectors and the academic officials of faculties are deans and vice-deans. The academic officials are elected by their respective academic senates.

The Higher Education Council is a self-governing body of the higher education institutions representing these institutions, primarily in relation to the Ministry of Education. It consists of representatives delegated by the academic senates of universities and faculties.

1.5. Inspection

Monitoring and evaluating the level and achievements in education and training in schools and educational establishments, the level of educational management and material-technical conditions of work at schools and educational establishments are provided by the school inspection body that also fulfils the function of the State controller. The school inspection mission is continuously to collect and work out information at the level of management, organization and quality of the educational process and on the efficiency of the measures and conceptual intentions of the Ministry of Education.

The school inspection body checks:

- observance of legal rules concerning educational work, educational norms and documents at central bodies and in organizations and establishments that are responsible for education and training, and implementation of principles set up by the Ministry of Education for the educational management of the schools, level and achievements in general subject teaching and extra-curricular education;
- results of the educational process, the state of education, and the level and efficiency of pedagogical and professional management of schools, educational establishments and district boards;

- equipment, appropriateness and efficiency of use of material, technical and educational technologies in the educational process;
- available human resources;
- provision of rights and conditions for education in the mother tongue and in the official language, and use of official languages in activities of schools, educational establishments and State administration bodies in education.

In addition, the school inspection body:

- draws the attention of the appropriate central authorities and organizations to the inadequacies and problems brought to light in the course of inspection activities at schools and educational establishments in their work and to the need to solve them;
- examines the complaints, incentives, announcements and petitions concerning the administration, personnel matters, content and results of education, excluding economic matters;
- submits opinions and information to the appropriate state administration bodies in the event of disputes concerning education, administration, establishment and closure or replacement of schools and educational establishments, changes in the scope and structure of school activities, and the allocation of funds for the material and technical provision of educational activities in schools and educational establishments.

The school inspection body is independent of headteachers of schools and educational establishments and school administration bodies. School inspections are carried out by the Ministry of Education and the regional and district boards. It is independent in its activities.

The Ministry of Education organization, if necessary, through its own research and method institutions, the monitoring and evaluation of the level and results of education and training, e.g. in individual subjects.

Evaluation in higher education institutions and universities is undertaken at two levels:

- internal, at the level of the institution itself, or the faculty;
- external, carried out by the Accreditation Commission of the Slovak Government and in two domains:
 - educational (accreditation);
 - scientific research (evaluation).

School psychology service

Counselling centres provide special services in educational counselling, special pedagogical counselling and care for children.

The counselling centres include educational psychology centres and facilities for special pedagogical counselling.

1.6. Financing

Schools, including higher educational institutions, receive special funding from the state budget and these funds are concentrated in the so-called Education Chapter. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for its preparation in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The budget is approved by Parliament. The distribution of funds from the national budget to the district boards and individual institutions (universities etc.) is in the hands of the Ministry of Education.

In previous years, a set of criteria indicating the cost of education in the various sections of the education system and for individual types of schools, was developed.

There are two types of schools:

- funded organizations - fully funded by the state with very limited possibilities to pursue their own economic activities;
- partially funded organizations - partially funded by the state with the possibility of generating additional financial resources.

At present, the Act on Foundations and Non-profit Organizations is in its preparatory stages.

The funds for primary schools are administered entirely by the appropriate district boards. Few primary schools have separate legal status. The funds for secondary schools are partly allotted to schools and partly used by the appropriate regional boards.

Primary schools, secondary specialized schools and *gymnasias* are funded by the Ministry of Education. Secondary vocational schools are funded by the appropriate Ministry depending on the sector (Ministries of Agriculture, Construction, Transport etc.). The district boards may combine the funds, if necessary, with communal or municipal bodies to help with the reconstruction of school buildings and the like.

The additional financing of public schools through financial foundations is just beginning. Some activities are also supported financially and materially by parents. Contributions from entrepreneurs have encountered obstacles due to insufficient legislation. Non-public schools receive regular contributions from parents according to the type of school and region. The state contribution to non-public schools is between 60 and 90% of the sum received by public schools and is destined to cover school running costs and teachers' salaries. Social support for pupils is given through family allowances. These are granted only to those families whose income per family member does not exceed a set limit. No scholarship scheme has yet been introduced for primary and secondary schools.

1.7. Private education

The conditions for the establishment of denominational and private schools were set up by an amendment to the Act No. 171 of 1990. Subsequently, after the amendment, the executive provisions for the establishment of denominational and private schools were adopted. Denominational schools are funded by the Ministry of Education budget. The amount of financing for individual types of denominational school is defined as the same amount as for comparable types of state-run schools.

Private schools are funded by grants from the state budget, the founders' resources and parents' contributions. The amount of grants from the national budget is established by government rules which define only the amount of the grant and the range of costs for textbooks, teaching aids and other needs. The amount granted here is the same as for a comparable type of public school. The amount of grants for private schools is defined by the Ministry of Education.

The founders of private schools are natural persons and legal entities. In practice all legal forms of existence apply for the founders of private schools from individuals, civil associations up to limited companies and joint stock companies. These are mostly secondary schools which have emerged due to the slowness of state secondary schools to adapt to the needs of the population and also due to the continually increasing interest of pupils in certain types of schools, e.g. commercial academies and secondary schools with an emphasis on languages and information technology. Founders of denominational schools are typically churches and religious societies. There is no separation between school and church.

Table 1 Number of state, private and church schools in 1995

	State	Church	Private
Nursery schools	3 312	3	11
Primary schools	2 405	87	5
Secondary schools	150	27	13
Secondary specialized schools	332	11	21
Secondary vocational schools	341	5	11

1.8. Advisory bodies

The Government set up the Accreditation Commission as its advisory body giving opinions on proposals for the establishment, dissolution and merger of higher educational institutions, on the recognition and withdrawal of rights to higher education institutions and faculties to hold state examinations in their respective fields of study, examinations leading to PhDs, habilitation procedures and the appointment of professors within higher education institutions.

The members of Accreditation Commission are nominated from among the outstanding academic staff of higher education institutions and professional and scientific institutions.

The Commission has a President and 22 members. The members of the Commission may also be foreign experts. Membership may be combined with academic functions. The School Boards are active at school level and the Territorial School Boards are active at regional level.

The School Board and Territorial School Board are self-administering and self-governing bodies expressing and enforcing the local interests of parents and teachers in education and training.

2. Pre-school education (*Predškolská výchova*)

Pre-school establishments are one of the important aspects of the school system in the Slovak Republic. The development of pre-school education is closely connected with the legislature: the Ministry of Education Decree No. 353 of 1994, on pre-school establishments came into force on 1 January 1995.

Pre-school education is voluntary. It provides education and instruction for children of pre-school age and, at the same time, prepares children for compulsory school attendance.

The pre-school establishments include nursery schools and special nursery schools. Special nursery schools and special classes in nursery school are set up for children who are mentally, sensorially and physically disabled, children with impaired communication ability and children with multiple handicaps.

The nursery schools admit children from 3 to 6 years of age. If the establishment is appropriately equipped, 2-year-olds may also be admitted but children who are over 5 and children who have postponed compulsory school attendance are preferred. These schools are coeducational and children may enrol freely. There are no entrance requirements.

The pre-school establishment is divided into classes. Each class includes, as a rule, children of similar age.

The number of children in a nursery school class with half-day or full-day educational care cannot exceed:

- 20 children from 3 to 4 years of age;
- 23 children from 4 to 5 years of age;
- 25 children from 5 to 6 years of age;
- 20 children from 3 to 6 years of age.

If a class includes a child under 3 years, the maximum number of children in a class is decreased by one child. If parents enrol 14 children under 3 years of age, these children are included in a separate class: not more than 20 children may attend this class.

After 1989, the unified programme for education in nursery schools was abolished and new educational approaches were applied. Nursery school teachers received more scope for their individuality, creativity and initiative. Many experiments have been introduced, such as foreign language teaching in nursery schools, depending on the interest of parents or staff and material conditions.

As a result of the poor financial situation in the education sector, the operation of nursery schools was limited and the attendance fees for these establishments, which are paid by parents, were raised. This fact has meant that, since 1990, numbers in nursery schools have been going down and figures have dropped from 92.3% in 1989 to 70.8% in the appropriate age group in 1995.

2.1. Teachers/Staff

To train qualified nursery school teachers, a four-year course is provided at teacher training college or at the university faculty of education or at secondary teacher training college. Studies undertaken at secondary training college can also lead to a teaching diploma. During the four years of school a course of pre-school

pedagogy and psychology is offered. Pre-school teachers are not legally required to follow in-service training. Teachers in public schools are civil servants. They may work full-time or part-time.

There are 28 hours of lessons at nursery school. One teaching hour lasts 45 minutes. Children in pre-school education learn mainly through games and other activities and there is no form of assessment for pupils.

The pupil:teacher ratio at pre-school level was 23.5:1 in 1994.

2.2. Statistics

Table 2 Nursery schools

Year	Pupils	Classes	Schools	Attendance rate (%)
1989	241 458	9 390	4 052	92.30
1992	187 921	8 549	3 642	78.53
1994	174 436	7 387	3 343	75.12
1995	161 697	7 445	3 322	70.80

3. Compulsory education

In the Slovak Republic, nine years of compulsory school attendance have been established to be completed at primary school or at both primary and secondary school. The last year of compulsory education may be spent at primary school in year 9 or at secondary school in the first year. Compulsory education may be completed by attending public or private schools.

Compulsory education starts as a rule at the beginning of the school year following the child's sixth birthday. It lasts usually until the end of the school year in which the pupil turns 15.

At present, in harmony with the implementation of the Programme Declaration of the Government, a proposal on the introduction of compulsory nine-year school attendance at primary school has been approved. The Government has adopted a variant of gradual transformation of the eight-year primary school to nine years. Over three years, the number of pupils continuing their schooling in year 9 of primary school annually will increase by 33.3%. In practice, this means that as late as the 1999/2000 school year, all pupils in year 8 will pass on to year 9. Pupils in this group will be obliged to apply for admission to secondary school after completing year 9 of primary school.

4. Primary education (*Základné vzdelávanie*)

Children are enrolled in primary schools upon reaching the age of 6. They may be enrolled younger or older if there is good reason for this.

Primary school (*základná škola*) takes nine years to complete. It is designed for those pupils who do not wish, or are not allowed, to study at secondary school, for example, they were not accepted into the field of study for which they had applied. As of the school year 1999/2000, the ninth year will be compulsory for all pupils.

Primary school has two stages: the first stage with years 1 to 4, the second stage with years 5 to 9. The second stage of primary school is comparable with lower secondary education.

Primary school provides pupils with the primary elements and tools of knowledge. In addition to general, ethical, aesthetic, polytechnical, health, environmental and physical education, it also offers religious education as a non-compulsory subject at the first stage of primary school and as an optional subject with ethics at the second stage of primary school.

After successfully completing primary school, the pupil or any other applicant may be admitted to the first year of full-time study in secondary school. Upon completing the fourth year of primary school, the pupil may be admitted to the eight-year secondary school, dance school, dance conservatory or sports school.

Primary schools have a pedagogical consultant whose task is to provide career guidance to pupils.

Primary education in state schools is free and is offered in the child's mother tongue (Slovak, Hungarian, Ukrainian, German). It is coeducational.

The school year lasts 10 months, from 1 September to 30 June of the next year. Classes are organized by age. During the years 1989-94, the average class size decreased from 26.3 to 23.9 pupils. Some primary schools currently work on a two-shift system of classes and the number of pupils in these classes decreased from 39 406 to 9 714.

In 1995/96 the pupil:teacher ratio was 16.9:1.

4.1. Curriculum

At primary school, the internal and external differentiation of education continues, especially through the introduction of new curricula, as well as through further experimentation. At present, three variants of curricula are introduced in the first stage and four variants in the second stage of primary school. A special curriculum is set out for year 9 of primary school.

The Slovak Republic has a system of nationwide curriculum documents. The most significant are curricula (lists of subjects for the appropriate type of school or field of study with the number of hours) and subject curricula which define objectives for a given subject, framework and content (curriculum standards), proposed number of lessons for individual units, laboratory and other exercises and sometimes performance criteria.

The proposals for national curricula are prepared by working groups composed of specialists in research and curriculum development, headteachers and teachers of the respective schools, university specialists and teacher training institutions. In vocational education and training, the social partners are also invited. The proposals, adjusted after prior discussions, are submitted for assessment to the Ministry of Education along with information on the use of comments to be discussed. The curricula are valid throughout the state once they have been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Some changes to the timetable are allowed, provided that the main subject objectives are preserved.

Following the new Act on Primary and Secondary Schools to be implemented from the 1997/98 school year, the nine-year primary school becomes compulsory. The new curricula for the second stage of primary school have three variants, each having the possibility to extend classes according to school conditions and pupils' interests. The weekly number of lessons is reduced as follows:

Year 5	26 lessons
Year 6	28/29 lessons
Years 7, 8, 9	29/30 lessons

In addition, schools may prepare curricula for optional subjects and thus be more flexible in their reaction to pupils' interests and the needs of the labour market.

Teachers may choose teaching materials from the list of recommended textbooks. Textbooks are produced exclusively on the basis of competition. The competition commission which evaluates the quality of competing offers is made up of experienced teachers, workers from scientific institutions and outstanding teachers. Each literary teaching aid that is used at school must be approved by the Ministry of Education. The approved teaching aids are included in the list of textbooks recommended for schools which is provided to schools once a year. The compulsory subject textbooks are lent to primary school pupils free of charge.

4.2. Assessment

The rules of assessment and marking in primary school are set up by the Ministry of Education in a generally binding legal regulation. Teachers are responsible for all assessments. They use a system of marks which ranges from 5 to 1 (5 fail, 1 excellent). The subjects of Religion and Ethics are not marked. A three-point system of marks is used for assessing pupils' behaviour. Pupils are tested in oral and written examinations. The overall progress of the pupil is shown in certificates at the end of each school year. Unsuccessful pupils must repeat the year.

In the school year 1988/89, a verbal assessment was introduced in the first years of primary school. In the school year 1995/96, there is the possibility of introducing a verbal assessment of pupils in years 2 to 4 of primary school too. That can be done by means of a proposal from a majority of parents of pupils attending year 1 of primary school, or their guardians, and following approval by the pedagogical board of the primary school.

4.3. Teachers

Primary school teachers are trained at university level. The teacher training colleges or faculties of education at universities train teachers for the first stage of primary school through a four-year course, and for the second stage of primary school through a five-year course. Studies for the second stage of primary school take the form of a combination of two general subjects. Studies for both stages are completed with a state final examination. Teachers in officially recognized private schools must have the same qualifications as those in state schools.

The system of in-service teacher education underwent further changes in 1996 when two new decrees came into force:

- Decree No. 41 of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic of January 26, 1996 on the Professional and Pedagogical Competence of Educational Staff;
- Decree No. 42 of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic of January 26, 1996 on In-Service Education of Educational Staff.

According to the latter, the in-service education of teachers will be carried out in the following forms:

- an involvement of the new educational staff in practical issues;
- preparation of senior educational staff receiving a bonus for seniority;
- on-going education;
- specialized innovative study;
- specialized study leading to further qualifications;
- extended courses.

The Decree on Professional and Pedagogical Competence of Educational Staff introduced the "qualification examinations" that will be considered, carried out and completed by the methodological centres and the National Institute for Education, managed by the Ministry and by educational organizations from other state administration central bodies established by schools and higher education institutions.

Examinations are divided into:

- the first examination for education staff who have completed higher education in the appropriate field of study or the subject and have at least five years' experience;
- the second examination for educational staff who have completed higher education in the appropriate field of study or the subject and have at least ten years' experience.

Examinations will be held by a five-member commission and involve a final thesis and an oral examination in the teacher's specific subject or in the field of management depending on the examinee's choice.

After completing the first examination, teachers receive a certificate stating the improvement in their professional and educational competence. Upon completing this examination, teachers are entitled to be put on a salary scale set up under special regulations.

The completion of the second examination is considered by the employer to be up to the teachers themselves. Teachers in state schools are civil servants. They may be employed on either a full-time or a part-time basis.

4.4. Statistics

Table 3 Primary schools

Year	Classes	Classrooms	Schools	Pupils
1989	27 559	29 539	2 302	724 919
1993	28 518	33 053	2 483	690 189
1994	28 224	33 228	2 481	675 813
1995	28 285	33 327	2 485	661 082

In 1995 the average number of pupils per class was 23.4.

Table 4 Breakdown of teachers in the teaching process during the 1995/96 school year

School	Female	Male	Teachers	% Female
Primary Schools	32 561	6 663	39 224	83.01

Table 5 Primary schools (percentage of primary school pupils aged 6 to 13, excluding special education)

Year	Attendance rate (%)
1994	97.71
1995	97.39

Source: (Tables 1 to 4) Beöo, M. - Lipská, M.: *Analysis of structural development of nursery schools, primary and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic (1988-1994)*. Institute of Information and Prognoses for Education, Youth and Sport, Bratislava, 1995.

5. Secondary education (*Stredoškolské vzdelávanie*)

Secondary schools provide for pupils' secondary specialized education, complete secondary education and complete secondary vocational education. They prepare pupils to carry out professions and activities within the national economy, administration, culture, art and other fields. In addition, they prepare students for higher education studies. Secondary education ends with a school leaving examination.

Secondary schools are divided into the following types: secondary vocational schools, secondary and secondary specialized schools. Admission to secondary schools is conditional upon the successful completion of primary school.

The Ministry of Education sets out the range of competence and duties of secondary school principals regarding the admission of pupils and other applicants for secondary school study. In secondary nursing schools, this occurs in agreement with the Ministry of Health.

Secondary schools are established or closed according to the network determined by the Ministry of Education, and in the case of health schools, by the Ministry of Health.

Secondary schools are part of the network of secondary schools, which shows their territorial distribution, types and kinds, fields of study and concentrations and, for secondary vocational schools and private and

denominational schools, also their founder(s). At schools where the teaching language is not Slovak, the teaching language is also indicated.

Secondary schools are granted the status of legal entity by Act No. 171/1990 of the Legal Code. This transfer to the status of legal entity gives the headteacher greater competence in decision-making. The school becomes an employer (appoints and dismisses its staff) and decides on the efficient use of allotted funds according to regulations on financed organizations.

5.1. Secondary vocational schools

Secondary vocational schools prepare pupils for:

- performing workers' trades and vocational activities corresponding to the particular branch of apprenticeship pursued. The course lasts for two or three years and ends with a final examination;
- performing some demanding workers' trades and some technical-economic activities of an operational nature. The course lasts for four years and ends with a school leaving examination (*maturita*).

Secondary vocational schools provide theoretical and practical courses for pupils and for practical training and education outside classes. They may also provide purely theoretical teaching and out-of-school education or practical training and out-of-school education.

The founders of secondary vocational schools are legal entities and natural persons, churches or religious societies. The educational process is mostly provided according to curricula approved by the Ministry of Education.

The establishment of private schools and denominational schools in 1994 was one of many significant changes made to the system of founders of secondary vocational schools. In 1994, the composition of secondary vocational schools' and apprentice training centres' founders was as follows: 15.35% LEAs, 77.09% enterprises, 2.75% cooperatives, 3.35% other personalities and 1.4% church.

During the 1994/95 school year, 358 secondary vocational schools were involved in the network, with 138 to 173 students. Of this number, 341 schools are state-run, 11 private, and 5 denominational. According to the percentage that means that 95.25% are state-run, 3.35% private and 1.40% denominational.

Apprentice training centres provide vocational training for undemanding occupations for pupils who have completed compulsory school attendance at primary school for less than nine years or for pupils who did not succeed in completing the nine years of primary school. Studies at the apprentice training centre ends with a final examination.

5.2. Specialized secondary schools

Specialized secondary schools prepare primarily for performing professional activities (namely, technical-economic, management, educational, health care, socio-legal, administrative, artistic and cultural). They also prepare students for higher education studies. Studies usually take four years and end with a school leaving examination (*maturita*).

In the school year 1995/96, there were 364 schools in the network of specialized secondary schools. Out of this number, 332 schools are state-run. There are 119 853 pupils attending these schools and 14 844 teachers.

Private schools make up part of the total number of specialized secondary schools, with 21 schools. There are 11 denominational specialized secondary schools.

According to the appropriate legislation, the founders of private specialized secondary schools are legal entities and natural persons, and the founders of denominational schools are church or religious societies. As of the 1995/96 school year, five additional schools were involved in the network of private specialized secondary schools in agreement with the Ministry of Education.

Conservatories

Conservatories represent a specific type of secondary school preparing students for the fields of singing, music, dance or drama. They also prepare students for higher education studies. Studies at the conservatory take six years and, in the field of dance, eight years, and end with the *absolutorium*.

5.3. Gymnasium

The *gymnasium* is a general, internally differentiated school that prepares students primarily for studies in higher education institutions. It also prepares them for carrying out some activities in administration, culture and other sectors. The period of study lasts at least four years and at most eight years. The four-year *gymnasium* is linked into years 8 or 9 of primary school. Admission to the eight-year *gymnasium* is subject to the completion of year 4 of primary school. The first eight-year *gymnasias* were established during the 1991/92 school year.

Since the beginning of the 1995/96 school year, four denominational and three private *gymnasias* have been incorporated into the network which increased their share in the total number of *gymnasias*.

The founders of the private *gymnasias* are legal entities and natural persons and the founders of denominational *gymnasias* are churches or religious societies.

The educational process is chiefly provided according to curricula and syllabi approved by the Ministry of Education and in harmony with Act No. 350/1994 of the Legal Code. The four-year and eight-year study programmes apply here. Out of this study there are specializations approved for *gymnasias*; the private and denominational *gymnasias* are mostly oriented towards foreign languages, and, sometimes, mathematics. The alternative *gymnasias* are mostly oriented towards preparing students for higher education studies.

5.4. Curriculum

The procedure for curriculum preparation is the same as for primary school. Teachers have the possibility to specify the curriculum according to region, school condition and pupil's interests and needs. There is also the possibility to prepare curricula for optional subjects.

5.5. Assessment

Assessment of students and the marking system are the same as at primary schools. Study at secondary schools which allow access to higher education ends with the school leaving examination (*maturitná skúška*). It consists of four subjects, e.g. at *gymnasias* written and oral examinations in language and literature in the mother tongue, and an oral examination in mathematics or foreign languages, as well as two oral exams in optional subjects chosen by the individual students.

At secondary specialized schools and secondary vocational schools, written and oral examinations are held in language and literature, the theory and practice of vocational subjects and oral examinations are used to assess optional subjects

5.6. Teachers

Secondary school teachers are trained in various faculties of universities and other higher education institutions, depending on the nature of the particular subjects within the specialist teaching areas. The course takes five years and ends with a state final examination.

Graduates of technical universities and other higher education institutions, without any of the pedagogical education necessary for teaching their specialized subject at secondary schools, may receive pedagogical-psychological education as further education at technical universities. The system of in-service teacher education is the same as for primary school teachers. Teachers in state schools are civil servants. They may work full-time or part-time.

5.7. Statistics

Table 6 *Gymnasia*

Year	Pupils	Classes	Classrooms	Schools
1989	50 880	1 638	2 362	128
1993	68 006	2 169	3 105	175
1994	72 072	2 306	3 385	183
1995	76 380	2 445	3 519	190

Average number of pupils per class in 1995 was 31.2.

Table 7 *Specialized secondary schools*

Year	Pupils	Classes	Classrooms	Schools
1989	80 545	2 637	3 873	181
1993	111 664	3 642	5 442	342
1994	117 145	3 824	5 866	361
1995	119 853	3 905	6 237	364

Average number of pupils per class in 1995 was 30.7.

Table 8 *Secondary vocational schools*

Year	Pupils	Classes	Classrooms	Schools
1989	155 240	5 953	5 010	311
1993	138 465	5 450	5 223	344
1994	138 173	5 338	5 207	358
1995	139 688	5 375	5 248	357

Average number of pupils per class in 1995 was 25.9.

Table 9 *Breakdown of teachers in the educational process at secondary schools in 1995/96*

School	Female	Male	Teachers	% Female
<i>Gymnasium</i>	4 404	2 111	6 515	67.60
<i>Secondary Specialized Schools</i>	8 463	5 015	13 478	62.79
<i>Secondary Vocational Schools</i>	7 203	7 641	14 844	48.52
<i>Slovak Republic</i>	20 070	14 767	34 837	57.61

Table 10 *Pupil to teacher ratio in secondary schools*

<i>Gymnasia</i>	11.7
<i>Specialized schools</i>	8.9
<i>Vocational schools</i>	9.4

Source: (Tables 6 to 10) Bešo, M. - Lipská, M.: *Analysis of structural development of nursery schools, primary and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic (1988-1994)*. Institute of Information and Prognoses for Education, Youth and Sport, Bratislava, 1995.

6. Post-secondary non-university education

These are courses which are not taught at university level and they lead to qualifications which are not comparable with those awarded at any level of education within the general system.

A new trend in vocational education is the possibility of obtaining higher vocational education. It is carried out in experimental, specialized, post-secondary fields of study (financing, computer technology, information processing, tourism, management and entrepreneurship in electrical engineering, law and social activities, tourism management) and is completed with the *absolutorium*. The course is carried out in specialized secondary schools which have a large amount of practical knowledge. It lasts 3 years and is linked to the successful completion of secondary specialized school having obtained the school leaving examination.

The curricula have been developed in close cooperation with professional higher educational institutions abroad so as to meet requirements for the preparation of the workforce to enter the European Union market.

Teachers are the same as in secondary specialized schools with the same fields of study.

At present, this form of non-university study is established by the amendment to the Education Act and is subject to approval.

7. Higher education

Higher education institutions are public institutions and are regulated by the Higher Education Act No. 172/90, as amended by the changes and supplements of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 41/1994 of the Legal Code and 324/1996 of the Legal Code. Education is free and guaranteed by the Constitution. Higher education institutions are state-run and financed from the state budget. The amended Higher Education Act enables the establishment of non-state institutions as well as the possibility of funding from other sources.

In the Slovak Republic, there are 21 higher education institutions (including 3 new constituted in 1997), of which 18 are in the education sector, of university, technical and artistic types. In the sector of the Ministry of Defence there are two institutions and in that of the Ministry of the Interior, one institution. Four are oriented towards humanities and natural sciences, one is veterinary, one teacher training, three technical, one economic, two pedagogical and two artistic. Every higher education institution has its own statutes registered at the Ministry of Education.

In conjunction with Act No. 172/90, the Higher Education Council was established which represents the higher education institutions to the Ministry of Education. It comments on financing higher education institutions and on other proposals and measures. The Higher Education Council is composed of representatives delegated by the academic senates of the higher education institutions and faculties.

The Government establishes the Accreditation Commission as its advisory body which comments on the establishment, closure and merging of higher education institutions and faculties, on the recognition or withdrawal of the rights of higher education institutions and faculties to hold the State PhD. examinations in the appropriate branches, on habilitation and inauguration procedures and on the appointment of associate professors and professors to higher education institutions. The higher education institutions provide for qualifications such as the Bachelor (Bc.); Magister (Mgr.), Engineer (Ing.), or Doctor (MUDr., MVDr.) – these studies are comparable to the Master's qualification – and postgraduate (Doctorate education) PhD. Education is predominantly completed through full-time study, although some faculties, mainly with a technical orientation, also provide part-time forms of study. In addition, some faculties offer one-year or two-year courses after the completion of secondary or higher education, such as retraining in languages, economics, computer technology, education science, etc.

For those interested in the course from among the older generation (pre-retirement and retirement age), i.e. in universities for the third age, the higher education institutions provide one-year or two-year, part-time courses in, for instance, health care, economics, pedagogy, etc.

Higher education institutions include universities and other types of higher educational institutions. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, universities and other higher education institutions are public institutions. We distinguish the following types of higher education institution:

- higher education institutions aimed at the humanities, providing education in broad fields of study such as medicine and veterinary medicine, pharmacy, science, philosophy, law, teacher training, economics, theology, etc.;
- technical colleges aimed at the branches of civil engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, electrical engineering and computer science, transport and telecommunications, mining, metallurgy;
- institutions oriented towards agriculture, forestry, the timber industry and agricultural industry;
- economic institutions oriented towards economics, management, trade, etc.;
- artistic academies providing education in theoretical, artistic fields and the fields of music, dance, film and drama as well as fine art, architecture and sculpture.

7.1. Admission

Candidates are admitted on the basis of an admissions procedure. Each faculty sets up its own criteria for admission and numbers of students based on financial and staff conditions. The primary criteria for admission are secondary education with a school leaving qualification (except for some artistic branches). Other criteria, such as the admission examination and its content and form, are set up by each faculty independently. At each faculty there are admissions examinations and the number of applicants is normally double the number which the faculties can accept.

7.2. Fees/student financing

In accordance with the Higher Education Act, education is free at all levels. Students with very good results or from poor social backgrounds are granted scholarships. In addition, students may be granted loans up to the amount of 256 ECU per year, guaranteed by the state.

In the course of their studies students pay certain administrative fees set up by faculties to cover admission procedures, enrolments, fees for diplomas, etc.

7.3. Academic year

The academic year starts on September 1 and ends on August 31 of the following year. Teaching starts in September and ends after the examination session on June 30. The exact dates are set by each institution individually.

7.4. Fields of study/qualification

Higher education is organized according to the length of study in three subsequent cycles (complex periods of study). The first period leads to the Bachelor degree (Bc.). It is organized as an independent part of a course that will prepare students for continuing their studies at Masters level, or for working in a profession which requires a lower higher education qualification.

The second level is organized as the second level of university education lasting three years or as a separate five-year to six-year course. The graduates receive the degrees of Engineer (Ing.), Magister (Mgr.) and, in medical and veterinary faculties, the degree of Doctor of Medicine (MUDr.) and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (MVDr.).

The third level – postgraduate study – sets out an independent period of study (lasting 3 to 4 years) that is provided by higher educational institutions and research institutions. It leads to the scientific qualification of Doctor (PhD).

7.5. Evaluation

The procedure of awarding university honours is established in the Act. Students completing the second or third degree complete the state examination and prepare a thesis to be defended before an examination commission. Bachelor studies end with the state examination.

7.6. Teachers

All university teachers are expected to have higher qualifications, or scientific qualifications. The number of university teachers after 1989 remained stable at around 8 000 and for 1995 the figure was 8 014.

The status of professors, associate professors and scientific workers is equal to that of civil servants. The employment of visiting professors and associate professors, lecturers and assistants is based on contracts for a period of five years.

7.7. Statistics

Table 11 Professional staff in higher educational institutions

	1990/91	1994/95
Professors	477	539
Associate professors	2 311	2 230
Lecturers	4 952	4 931

Table 12 Number of students in higher education (including part-time students) in 1994/95

Type of institution	Students
Universities	
humanities	21 986
technical	30 497
economics	16 308
Teacher training colleges	13 722
Artistic academies	1 206

Source: *Statistical Yearbook 1994*, Institute of Information and Prognoses for Education, Bratislava.

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OBJECTIVES

The role of EURYDICE, the Information Network on Education in Europe, is to promote the exchange and the production of reliable information on education systems and on national policies in the field of education in Europe. It contributes to increasing mutual understanding and cooperation between the 15 Member States of the European Union.¹

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

In 1976, when the Council and the Education Ministers adopted the Resolution on a first programme for cooperation in the field of education, they gave recognition to the importance, in this context, of exchanges of information and experience. It was on this basis that the EURYDICE network was set up and became operational in 1980. Ten years later, in 1990, the Council and the Ministers adopted a Resolution dealing specifically with EURYDICE and calling for a reinforcement of its services. The Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union) marked an important step forward, providing in the new Chapter 3, Article 126, for developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States. It has thus opened up for EURYDICE new prospects of which the Community education programme, SOCRATES, adopted on 14 March 1995, takes full account (Annex, Chapter III, Action 3, point 2). It is under this Programme that the development of EURYDICE is now assured.

ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES

The network comprises **National Units**, located in the Ministries of Education or in bodies closely related to them. The **European Unit** of the network, established by the European Commission, coordinates the network's activities and comparative studies. Eurydice produces a great variety of basic documents and comparative analyses on topics of interest to cooperation in education at Community level as well as a unique database on education systems. The network is increasingly called upon to fulfil the role of an "Observatory", in relation to the development of the education systems and policies in the European Union¹. Through the dissemination of its publications, and in particular through its web site on the Internet, EURYDICE also reaches a wide public in the education world.

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- Database on the education systems (EURYBASE).
- Various comparative documents and studies on education.

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¹ Under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are participating in the activities of the EURYDICE network in the same way as the Member States of the European Union. Moreover, since 1996, the network activities have been open to the central and eastern European countries and to Cyprus.

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